

Own the Podium Funding and Support: The Athletes' Perspective

Hillary Pattenden, B.A.

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts' degree in
Applied Health Sciences

(Sport Management)

Faculty of Applied Health Sciences, Brock University

St. Catharines, Ontario

Hillary Pattenden © 2015

ATHLETES' PERSPECTIVE ON OWN THE PODIUM

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to understand the experiences of Canada's high performance athletes who have benefitted from Own the Podium (OTP)-recommended funding and support leading up to an Olympic or Paralympic Games. OTP, a nonprofit agency, is responsible for determining the overall investment strategy for high performance sport in Canada through recommendations to support national sport organizations (NSOs) with the aim to improve Canadian performances at the Olympic and Paralympic Games. For this study, data were collected through in-depth interviews with eleven Canadian high performance athletes (i.e., single-sport Summer/Winter Olympians and Paralympians and recently retired athletes). Analysis of the data resulted in twelve overarching themes; resources, pressure, missing gap, results, targeting, stress, expectations, boost in confidence, OTP relationship, OTP name, pre/post OTP, and lost funding. Overall, results from this exploratory research indicate that athletes generally had a favourable perception regarding OTP-recommended funding and support.

Keywords: Own the Podium, high performance sport, athlete funding, Olympic Games, Paralympic Games

ATHLETES' PERSPECTIVE ON OWN THE PODIUM

Acknowledgements

I would like to begin my list of acknowledgements by expressing my sincere gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Lucie Thibault. It has been an absolute pleasure working alongside you for the past two and a half years during my time at Brock University. Your guidance and expertise was invaluable throughout this experience. The book Sport Policy in Canada will always hold a special spot on my bookshelf!

I would also like to thank my committee members, Drs. Lisa Kikulis and Ian Ritchie. Your feedback during the course of my research greatly contributed to the quality of my thesis. I appreciate you both agreeing to serve on my committee and for taking this research journey with me. A special thank you to Dr. Nicole Forrester for your contribution to my thesis as an external examiner, your valuable insight made this study better.

I could not have conducted this research study without the support of Own the Podium agreeing to provide a letter of support encouraging athletes to participate in this study. As well, I very much appreciate the role the Canadian Sport Institutes played with assisting me in gaining access to Canada's high performance athletes.

I would also like to thank my fellow graduate student peers within the Department of Sport Management. I have fond memories of my time here at Brock and have enjoyed getting to know each and every single one of you. I hope our paths cross again as we embark on our careers within the sport industry.

Lastly, I would like to thank my family and friends for your ongoing encouragement and interest in my studies. Thinking back on these past few years, it was

ATHLETES' PERSPECTIVE ON OWN THE PODIUM

all of you who really helped keep my energy, passion and focus on completing my graduate studies.

ATHLETES' PERSPECTIVE ON OWN THE PODIUM

Table of Contents

Chapter I – Introduction	1
Purpose of Study	6
Study Breakdown	7
Chapter II – Review of Literature.....	8
The Evolution of Own the Podium	8
History.....	8
Criticism.....	10
Support.....	14
Relevant High Performance Sport Literature	16
Canada.....	16
Podium Vision	18
Investing.....	18
Targeting	19
International Comparison of High Performance Sport Strategies	22
Funding Within High Performance Sport	26
Funding Support.....	26
Athlete Assistance Program (AAP)	29
B2ten	31
Canadian Athletes Now Fund (CAN Fund).....	32
Canadian Olympic Committee (COC) Rewards.....	32
Sufficient Funding Amounts.....	34
Chapter III – Research Methods.....	36

ATHLETES' PERSPECTIVE ON OWN THE PODIUM

Research Paradigm.....	37
Participant Sample and Selection.....	38
Recruiting Strategies	40
Data Collection Process	42
In-depth Interviews	42
Digital Audio Recording.....	45
Transcribing	45
Limitations	46
Data Analysis	48
Quality Qualitative Research	50
Worthy Topic	50
Rich Rigor	50
Sincerity	51
Self-Reflexivity	51
Self-Reflective Journal.....	52
Credibility	54
Resonance	54
Significant Contribution.....	54
Ethical Practices	55
Meaningful Coherence.....	55
Chapter IV – Results and Discussion.....	56
Resources	59
Pressure	79
Missing Gap	96

ATHLETES' PERSPECTIVE ON OWN THE PODIUM

Results	109
Targeting	114
Stress	127
Expectations	140
Boost in Confidence.....	145
OTP Relationship.....	153
OTP Name	163
Pre/Post OTP.....	170
Lost Funding	174
Chapter V – Conclusions.....	179
Recommendations for OTP.....	182
Recommendations for Future Research	184
References	188
Appendices.....	195

ATHLETES' PERSPECTIVE ON OWN THE PODIUM

List of Tables

<i>Table 1</i> – Research Participants	Page 39
<i>Table 2</i> – Themes and Codes	Page 57
<i>Table 3.1</i> – Resources.....	Page 60
<i>Table 3.2</i> – Pressure	Page 80
<i>Table 3.3</i> – Missing Gap	Page 97
<i>Table 3.4</i> – Results	Page 110
<i>Table 3.5</i> – Targeting.....	Page 116
<i>Table 3.6</i> – Stress.....	Page 128
<i>Table 3.7</i> – Expectations.....	Page 141
<i>Table 3.8</i> – Boost in Confidence	Page 146
<i>Table 3.9</i> – OTP Relationship.....	Page 155
<i>Table 3.10</i> – OTP Name	Page 165
<i>Table 3.11</i> – Pre-Post OTP.....	Page 171
<i>Table 3.12</i> – Lost Funding.....	Page 175

ATHLETES' PERSPECTIVE ON OWN THE PODIUM

List of Abbreviations

AAP	Athlete Assistance Program
CAN Fund	Canadian Athletes Now Fund
CAQDAS	Computer-Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software
COC	Canadian Olympic Committee
CODA	Calgary Olympic Development Association
CPC	Canadian Paralympic Committee
CSC	Canadian Sport Centre
CSI	Canadian Sport Institute
IST	Integrated Support Team
MSO	Multi-Sport Organization
NSO	National Sport Organization
OTP	Own the Podium
REB	Research Ethics Board
RTE	Road to Excellence
VANOC	Vancouver Organizing Committee for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games

Chapter I – Introduction

On July 2, 2003, for the future of funding for high performance athletes in Canada, a pivotal meeting took place between several leading organizations including Canada's winter National Sport Organizations (NSOs), the Canadian Olympic Committee (COC), the Canadian Paralympic Committee (CPC), WinSport Canada, and the Vancouver Organizing Committee (VANOC) for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games. This meeting ultimately resulted in the formation of Own the Podium (OTP) 2010 (Own the Podium, n.d.a). These leading organizations developed a set of common goals related to having Canada finish first in total medal count at the 2010 Olympic Winter Games and to finish within the top three countries in the gold medal count at the 2010 Paralympic Winter Games (Own the Podium, n.d.a). In order to achieve these goals, those in charge of OTP realized the need for a new high performance sport strategy to be implemented. The OTP 2010 program originally relied heavily on the COC since they played a lead role in the coordination of this new high performance strategy (Priestner Allinger & Allinger, 2004). Initially OTP focused solely on providing recommendations for funding allocation to targeted winter NSOs and athletes.

The OTP 2010 strategy proposed for high performance winter athletes included funding tiers based on various categories. Tiers were designed with set criteria and were comprised of the following three categories for winter sports; 1) flat ice sports, 2) snow sports, and 3) sports needing specialized facilities (Priestner Allinger & Allinger, 2004). Canada's funding priorities were focused on athletes who were identified as potential medalists and evaluated by their contribution to the specific criterion as follows:

“Canadian culture, past performances, potential for success at 2010, and sustainability of

success past 2010” (Church, 2006, p. 382). In order for Canada to achieve the goal of placing at the top of the medal standings in 2010, OTP 2010 invested \$110 million over a five-year period leading up the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games (Own the Podium, 2014c). \$8 million of this investment was allocated to go directly towards the Top Secret Program (Own the Podium, n.d.b). According to OTP (n.d.b) the “Top Secret program focuses on four areas of research: air friction, ice friction, snow friction, and human performance” (para. 3). The research program is still in effect today and is now known as the Innovation for Gold program (Spencer, 2013).

On February 2 and 3, 2004 another meeting took place between members of several leading organizations including winter NSOs, COC, CPC, the Calgary Olympic Development Association¹ (CODA), VANOC, 2010 LegaciesNow, and Sport Canada (Church, 2006). Canada’s goal set by these leading organizations for the 2010 Olympic Winter Games was to finish first in total medals, which would require a larger pool of athletes who were capable of achieving medal success (Church, 2006). The implementation of the OTP 2010 high performance sport strategy was initiated only five and a half years before the 2010 Games. This was considered a major challenge due to the fact that the majority of sports require between 8 to 12 years in order to develop a potential Olympian or Paralympian (Priestner Allinger & Allinger, 2004). At the 2010 Olympic Winter Games Canadian athletes won a total of 14 gold medals, 26 total medals, and a successful 72 top eight finishes (Kidd, 2013). The total of 14 gold medals set a new record for Canada as they won more gold medals at a single Winter Games than any other country before (The Canadian Olympic Committee, 2010). Team Canada finished a

¹ Calgary Olympic Development Association is now known as WinSport Canada.

respective third place in the medal count at the conclusion of the 2010 Vancouver Olympic Winter Games. Many have credited OTP 2010 for helping to develop successful Canadian athletes who produced winning results through Canada's investment into high performance sport (cf. Donnelly, 2010b; HarrisDecima, 2012; Kingston, 2010; Lawrie & Corbett, 2011).

Canada's Paralympic athletes also had incredible performances in Vancouver, which led the country to a top three finish in the total of gold medals (Kingston, 2010). OTP 2010's original goal of finishing in the top three nations was met on the Paralympic side as the athletes improved from a fifth-place finish in 2006, to third overall at the 2010 Paralympic Winter Games. Canada's Paralympians reached a new milestone by shattering the previous record of 15 total medals when they brought home a total of 19 medals for Team Canada in 2010 (Kingston, 2010).

Building on the momentum for the upcoming 2010 Vancouver Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games, a pivotal decision was made in 2006 to increase high performance sport support by expanding the OTP 2010 strategy to include Canada's national summer targeted sports and athletes (Own the Podium, n.d.b). The strategy for the Olympic and Paralympic summer sports was originally called Road to Excellence (RTE) and a business plan was developed in 2005 (Jackson, 2006). This business plan was designed by the COC, the CPC, Sport Canada, and the 28 summer NSOs as a strategy for Canada to achieve success at both the upcoming 2008 and 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games (Jackson, 2006). Road to Excellence was the summer equivalent to the original OTP 2010 blueprint for winter high performance sport programming.

The RTE business plan was designed to focus on the summer sports in which Canada was historically proficient in by executing a targeting and funding allocation strategy (Jackson, 2006). Clear goals were outlined within the business plan with a target to see Canada finishing within the top 15 in total medal count at the 2008 Olympic Games and in the top 10 to 12 countries by 2012 (Jackson, 2006). It was anticipated that having a targeted approach system in place would enable Canada to achieve these goals and progress from their previous position of 19th at the 2004 Olympic Games (Jackson, 2006). Canada's results at the 2008 Olympic Games was a 13th placed finish and at the 2012 Olympic Games they finished in 14th place for total medal count (Wikipedia, 2015a, 2015b). On the Paralympic side, this plan was designed to ensure Canada finished within the top five nations in total gold medal count at both the 2008 and 2012 Paralympic Games (Jackson, 2006). The RTE strategy included a targeted approach similar to what OTP 2010 had created on the winter side. When considering what sports and athletes were to be funded for the upcoming Olympic and Paralympic Games, three categories were considered including 2004 medal results, 2008 medal predictions, and 2012 medal predictions (Jackson, 2006). Canada finished in 7th place at the 2008 Paralympic Games and in 20th place at the 2012 Paralympic Games for total gold medal count (Wikipedia, 2014a, 2014b). In December of 2009, both strategies RTE and OTP 2010 amalgamated to form what is known today as OTP (Own the Podium, 2013). In 2012, OTP became the independent not-for-profit organization that they are today (Own the Podium, 2014c).

OTP's (2013) current mission is "to lead the development of Canadian sports to achieve sustainable podium performances at the Olympic and Paralympic Games" (p. 2).

In order to achieve this mission, OTP is responsible for making investment recommendations in regards to funding and supporting Canada's top sports, teams and athletes (Own the Podium, 2014b). In 2014, OTP recommended \$61,287,000 of funding and support be invested into the various targeted NSOs during the year with the aim to improve Canada's performances on the world stage (Own the Podium, 2014d). OTP's current targeted NSOs include various summer and winter Olympic and Paralympic sports. OTP targeted a total of 20 winter sport disciplines for the 2014-2015 funding period, including five Paralympic sports (Own the Podium, 2014g). This 2014-2015 funding period was considered year one of the 2018 Winter Olympic and Paralympic quadrennial.

Within the summer sports, there were 32 targeted sport disciplines including 20 Olympic and 12 Paralympic sports for the 2014-2015 funding period (Own the Podium, 2014e). This 2014-2015 funding period was year three of the 2016 Summer Olympic and Paralympic quadrennial. In terms of non-targeted summer team sports, OTP identified seven different team programs to focus on during the 2014-2015 funding period (Own the Podium, 2014f). Initial attempts to target Canadian athletes who demonstrated promise in international competitions were made in 1971 with the Intensive Care program. The program was designed to fund only select athletes who were deemed to have the greatest potential to win a medal at the 1972 Olympic Games (Beamish & Borowy, 1987, 1988; Macintosh, Bedeck, & Franks, 1987).

In order to fully understand the effectiveness of OTP-recommended funding and support, what is currently missing is an understanding of the Canadian high performance athletes' perspective. No research has previously explored the perspectives of athletes

who have benefited from OTP-recommended funding and support. Although media reports leading up to, during, and immediately following the Olympic and Paralympic Games, have provided a glimpse into various athletes experiences and reflections on their performances – there has been no exploration into the perspectives of athletes and what it was or currently is like, to be a targeted OTP athlete. Aside from media accounts and survey reports, there has been no initiatives to directly query the athletes about their experiences as an OTP targeted athlete while training and competing for Canada. Furthermore, little to no research exists today on policy change or improvements in Canada's sport sector with regards to high performance athletes (cf. Thibault & Babiak, 2005, 2013; Peel, 2010).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory research was to investigate the experiences of high performance athletes who benefited from OTP-recommended funding and support and the impact of this funding and support on their training and performance. According to leaders of OTP (2014b), funding and support services may be offered to targeted NSOs to support the following areas: “coaching/technical leadership, training and competitions, sports science and sport medical support and organizational capacity to manage an effective high performance program” (para. 2). The following fundamental research questions ultimately guided this interpretive study:

1. What are the experiences of Canada's high performance athletes who have benefited from OTP-recommended funding and support through their national sport organization, leading up to and during an Olympic or Paralympic Games?

2. What are the perceptions of Canada's high performance athletes regarding the impact OTP-recommended funding and support through NSOs had on their performances?

Study Breakdown

In the following chapter, a review of relevant literature is provided. The history of the organization is featured along with criticisms regarding OTP. Literature relating to support for the strategy put forth by OTP is also reviewed in the following section. Within this chapter, the other key areas of research that are addressed include relevant high performance sport literature, an international comparison of high performance sport strategies, and current athlete funding within high performance sport.

Chapter III is focused on the methodological underpinnings of the research. This chapter includes a discussion on the type of interviews that were undertaken to collect data from the selected participants. As well, details are provided on the selection of the sample of participants and the recruitment strategies used to select these participants for interviews. This chapter addresses the data collection process and how data were analyzed. In Chapter IV, the results are presented and discussed and finally, Chapter V presents conclusions and recommendations for OTP as well as for future research.

Chapter II – Review of Literature

This review of literature is focused on four main areas: the evolution of Own the Podium (OTP), relevant high performance sport literature, international comparison of high performance sport strategies, and current funding within high performance sport. Articles and media reports are also reviewed within this section as no scholarly research has previously considered the athletes' voices about their experiences as OTP targeted athletes.

The Evolution of Own the Podium

This section focuses on the organization OTP, including the history behind the initial strategy and a brief background on its implementation within Canada's high performance system. Research involving both criticism and support pertaining to OTP's overall goals and structure is also discussed within this section.

History

To date, there are several works that have contributed to the history of OTP and the rationale behind the implementation of this relatively new high performance sport strategy within Canada. The formation of OTP dates back to Canada failing to win a single gold medal on home soil during both the 1976 Montreal Olympic Games and the 1988 Calgary Olympic Winter Games (Donnelly, 2010a).

Previous efforts to support Canadian high performance athletes at the Olympic Games were first introduced through two former programs known as Game Plan '76' and Best Ever '88' (Brown, 2008). According to Church (2006), both of these programs were criticized as they did not appear to produce podium results at the Olympic Games. Church (2006) criticized the pitfalls for both of the funding initiatives including

insufficient levels of funding, a relatively short funding period, a non-targeted athlete approach, and a lack of awareness in terms of research, technology advancement, and athlete or coach support services. Game Plan '76' and Best Ever '88' were largely unsuccessful in helping Canadian athletes prepare for the Olympic Games on home soil at the 1976 Montreal Games and the 1988 Calgary Winter Games. Game Plan '76' proved to be ineffective as it played only a minor role in contributing to athlete results in Montreal. Similarly, Best Ever '88' was also ineffective in that it failed to meet the single goal of winning a gold medal (Brown, 2006). Both funding initiatives laid the groundwork for the development of an improved funding structure as it pertains to high performance sport within Canada.

Athlete funding in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s originated mostly from public sources as the federal government (through the Athlete Assistance Program (AAP)) and some provincial governments provided subsidies to high performance athletes. The Canadian Olympic Committee also provided funding to Olympians (Thibault & Babiak, 2005, 2013). Pressures from athletes and from media on governments to increase funding levels to athletes were mounting as arguments that athletes were living below the poverty line were presented (Christie, 1995; Scanlan, 2003; Starkman, 2000). According to Sport Canada (2015), the focus of the AAP "is intended to offset some, but not all, of the living and training expenses athletes incur as a result of their involvement in high performance sport" (p. 1-1). With these pressures, increases in the subsidies to athletes through the AAP were introduced and nonprofit and charitable organizations were created to financially assist athletes in their quest for podium results, for example, organizations

such as the Canadian Athletes Now Fund (CAN Fund) (created in 1997) and B2ten (created in 2005) (Thibault & Babiak, 2005, 2013).

With Canada failing to win a gold medal on home soil during both the 1976 Montreal Olympic Games and the 1988 Calgary Olympic Winter Games, a transformation was needed in Canada's high performance sport system before the hosting of the 2010 Vancouver Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games.

Criticism

Major criticism has been associated with the implementation of OTP and this new high performance funding strategy (cf. Donnelly, 2010a; Willes, 2010; Wilson, 2014). Donnelly (2010a) argued that a negative connotation exists when such a narrow focus and emphasis is placed on winning. According to Donnelly (2010b), an emphasis on winning leads to the creation of two separate classes of athletes: one known as the elites (targeted athletes) and the others (non-targeted athletes). A few Canadians classified under 'the others' may have felt as if they were treated like a lower class of citizens when it came to receiving funding support from OTP (Donnelly, 2010a). Wilson (2014) also questioned OTP's heavy focus on medals and believed that by doing so ultimately leads our athletes' to failure. According to Wilson (2014), medals should not be the sole aim of competition but instead, they should be an outcome from athletes pursuing excellence.

Donnelly (2010a) also strongly criticized the strategy implemented by OTP as being un-Canadian due to the fact that Canada was to be hosting the Games and was essentially announcing to all other countries that they were better than them. Leading up to the 2010 Winter Games, OTP according to Donnelly (2010a), was encouraging a win-at-all-costs attitude by measuring success of the athletes by medals earned. This attitude

was also viewed as being un-Canadian and was harshly criticized by many, as it was considered not typical behaviour of Canadians. According to this strategy, athletes were only considered successful based on whether they earned a medal or not. Priestner Allinger and Allinger (2004) stated that Canada's success would be measured based on how the athletes performed at the 2010 Vancouver Winter Games. This extremely narrow characterization of success meant only athletes who had a podium finish at the Games were considered to be successful by OTP leaders (Donnelly, 2010a).

Following the conclusion of the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games, Donnelly revisited his opinion on the OTP and further questioned whether or not the strategy benefited Canadian athletes. According to Donnelly (2010b), OTP failed to achieve their original goal of finishing in first place in the medal standings, instead Canada ended in third place, the same result as previous Winter Games. The cost of the strategy and the level of money invested were heavily criticized when Canada won 26 medals, only two more than the previous medal count at the 2006 Torino Olympic Winter Games (Donnelly, 2010b). It was estimated that these additional two medals at the Olympic Winter Games were expensive at a cost of \$47 million in OTP-recommended funding for both medals. Although Canada earned seven more gold medals than the 2006 Torino Olympic Winter Games, it was estimated that the record of 14 gold medals at the 2010 Olympic Winter Games cost an additional \$94.5 million investment (Donnelly, 2010b). The record number of 26 total medals won was still critiqued, due to the fact that each medal won was expected and predicted by OTP, no athletes classified in 'the other' group were successful in bringing home a medal from the Games (Donnelly, 2010b).

It was suggested by Donnelly (2010b) that Canadian athletes felt a tremendous amount of pressure from the program by having potential medal contenders announced to the public well before the Games. As pointed out by Donnelly (2010b) announcing potential medal winners ahead of time led to an increase in funding and support for each athlete but also brought increased pressure to perform and be successful on the day of their event. Willes (2010) also strongly believed that the OTP strategy put additional pressure on Canadian athletes. Some athletes echoed this pressure by publicly apologizing for 'letting their country down' when they failed to win a medal at the Games. As an example, one of Canada's top skeleton athletes, Melissa Hollingsworth gave a tearful apology to the entire country for letting them down after she failed to reach the podium at the 2010 Olympic Winter Games, and finished in fifth place (Turner, 2010).

According to Turner (2010), Canada's speedskater Denny Morrison, also felt immense pressure at the Games and blamed the OTP program after his ninth-place finish for failing to allow him to train with his top competitor at the time, American Shani Davis. Some of Canada's summer sport athletes have also apologized after disappointing finishes at the Games; for example, triathlete Paula Findlay, who crossed the line in 52nd place at the 2012 Olympic Games (Burnett, 2012). According to Burnett (2012), Findlay continuously apologized to her family, friends, and the entire nation for letting them down with her disappointing finish. A medal hopeful, Findlay acknowledged the fact that Canadians had big hopes for her at the Olympic Games which resulted in her saying sorry to everyone in Canada, as, in her eyes, she had let them down (Burnett, 2012).

OTP received additional criticism before the Games for developing such a narrow definition of success with a sole focus on winning and finishing on top of the medal standings. A disappointing first week from Canadian athletes at the 2010 Olympic Winter Games led to the name OTP being mocked by many as athletes were failing to achieve any podium success at all (Donnelly, 2010b; Starkman, 2011). According to Starkman (2011) the name OTP was often mocked and referred to as “Disown the Podium”. Many viewed the program as being un-Canadian in nature (Starkman, 2011; Wente, 2010). After a slow first week of the 2010 Olympic Winter Games, both OTP and the COC revisited their definition of success and altered their vision to setting a record high number of gold medals at the 2010 Olympic Winter Games (Donnelly, 2010b). Donnelly (2010b), heavily criticized the OTP program for changing their definition of success midway through the Games.

Donnelly (2010b) argued that athletes should receive support for their efforts at the Games even if they are unsuccessful at winning a medal as long as they achieve excellence and perform well. There were several athletes at the 2010 Vancouver Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games who did not win a medal but still displayed excellent performances and top eight finishes and those athletes should also be supported, recognized, and valued.

Originally, OTP's targeting strategy was narrowly focused on identifying athletes who had the potential to reach the podium within the Olympic or Paralympic quadrennial. Addressing athletes with potential to reach podium results at future Games were overlooked by the organization until recently with the creation of a program called NextGen. The NextGen initiative is focused on identifying Canadian athletes who are

approximately five to eight years away from reaching the podium at an Olympic or Paralympic Games (CSI, 2014).

Research to date is heavily focused on the impact that OTP played at the 2010 Olympic Winter Games, with little focus on the Paralympic side (cf. Church, 2006; HarrisDecima, 2012; Humphreys, Johnson, Mason, & Whitehead, 2011). According to Priestner Allinger and Allinger (2004), a lack of priority and resources exist for Canada's Paralympian athletes, especially when compared to the Olympians. It is evident that more emphasis is needed on Canada's Paralympians to ensure they remain among the best in the world (Priestner Allinger & Allinger, 2004). A lack of priority focus on the Paralympic side is evident even on the OTP official website. According to Kikulis (2013), the news and information section on the OTP website clearly has fewer Paralympic success stories especially when compared to the abundant Olympic athlete celebration stories.

OTP leaders realize that still to this date, more attention is needed on Canada's Paralympians to ensure that they remain a top contender in the sporting world moving into 2020 and beyond. According to leaders of OTP (2013), Canada has fallen behind on the Paralympic summer sports in areas such as talent identification and development when compared to other top nations. A gap in knowledge exists in the field of sport management on the impact OTP-recommended funding and support has on Olympians and Paralympians since the implementation of the strategy until today.

Support

Even with the harsh criticism that came along with the newly implemented strategy for high performance sport by OTP, there was a large majority of Canadians who

strongly supported the organization's vision and goals. Following Canada's success at the Games it was evident that Canadians were in favor of the strategy implemented by OTP. According to Bird (2010), two thirds of Canadians believed that the impact OTP had on the athletes was primarily positive. The previous criticism of such an expensive investment during the five years leading up to the Games ended up being supported by approximately 77% of Canadians who thought this amount was a valuable contribution to preparing Canadian athletes (Bird, 2010). Approximately three in four Canadians felt strongly that it was imperative for Canada to finish within the top three places in the medal standings to prove that Canada is in fact a dominant country in the Olympic Winter Games. Canadians felt achieving a high place within the medal standing was due partially to the significant funding and high performance strategy implemented by OTP (Bird, 2010).

Humphreys, Johnson, Mason, and Whitehead (2011), contribute to the high performance sport research field through an examination of the support felt by Canadians in regards to the OTP program. The study consisted of nationally representative surveys, which focused on the value of medal success at the 2010 Vancouver Olympic Winter Games. Leading up to the 2010 Winter Games, 59% of Canadian respondents felt that it was crucial for Canadian athletes to succeed any other country in total gold medals. Following the Games those supporting the importance of winning the most gold medals increased to an average of 69% (Humphreys et al., 2011). Results from this particular study demonstrate the importance and value that OTP brings to Canadian athletes and their performances at the Games.

Similar results were found in a survey conducted by HarrisDecima (2012) in regards to the extent to which Canadians supported the concept behind OTP. It was found that approximately seven in 10 Canadians surveyed were in agreement to support OTP and Canadian athletes through tax dollars. Only 26% surveyed completely disagreed with having their tax dollars used to support OTP (HarrisDecima, 2012). It is apparent that many Canadian citizens support the notion of OTP, however there is a gap with limited information and research that focuses on the athletes' feelings and perceptions about this program and high performance strategy.

Relevant High Performance Sport Literature

High performance sport can be defined as “sport engaged in by elite athletes who achieve, or who aspire to achieve, or who have been identified as having the potential to achieve, excellence in world-class competition” (Bloom, Gagnon, & Hughes, 2006, p. 1). To date, there are several countries that are more than eager to contribute a significant amount of funding into their high performance sport systems in the hopes of achieving success at the Olympic Games (Donnelly, 2010a). According to De Bosscher, de Knop, van Bottenburg, and Shibli (2006), as a result of an increase in high performance investment, international events have turned into a global contest of which country has the better system in place. The increased amount of funding within the various countries has made all Olympic medals expensive to win, with gold medals being the most costly (Donnelly, 2010a).

Canada

The vision Canada has for the high performance sport sector is “to have Canada be the best in the world – to have the best high performance sport system and to

demonstrate Canadian excellence at the international level” (Zussman, 2009, p. 8).

Canada values their elite athletes as an integral component of their national identity as opposed to other nations (Bloom et al., 2006). Early attempts at improving Canadian athletes' performances through funding support was initially made in the early 1970s with Intensive Care '72 for athletes' preparation at the 1972 Summer and Winter Olympic Games (Beamish & Borowy, 1987, 1988; Macintosh, Bedeck, & Franks, 1987).

The Canadian Sport Policy was developed in 2002 and was comprised of four distinct pillars including enhanced participation, enhanced excellence, enhanced capacity, and enhanced interaction (Thibault & Harvey, 2013). With one of the priorities being enhanced excellence, necessary systems were implemented such as a more robust sport science and technology programs to help support Canadian athletes (Thibault & Harvey, 2013). Canada was awarded the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games in July 2003 which ultimately fuelled the country to achieve medal success (Kikulis, 2013). In 2004, one of the key suggestions made by Havaris and Danylchuk (2007) was the need for putting in place a high performance sport system involving a tiering structure of the various sports within Canada. A tier-type structure became evident within the actions identified by OTP. According to Kikulis (2013), OTP sought to “establish targets to assess athlete and sport system performance, enhance the use of sport science and establish the role of the national sport centres” (p. 115). A collaboration between key stakeholders within Canada's sport system reached the conclusion that it was necessary to target funding towards sports, athletes, and teams with medal potential (Kikulis, 2013).

Podium Vision

Achieving success at international competition starts when the athlete first envisions standing on the podium. Envisioning winning and earning the right to be on top of the podium motivates everyone involved in an athlete's journey including the athlete him/herself, coaches, and a team of support staff (Din & Paskevich, 2013). The drive to be successful at an Olympic Games and earn a medal for your country is what motivates elite athletes to prepare and train every single day for their sport (Din & Paskevich, 2013). As Din and Paskevich (2013) stated, a high performance athlete has to be at his/her very best the day of his/her Olympic event. In order to ensure this, athletes must devote years of practice and training to improve and reach their maximum ability by the time of the Games. These athletes rely heavily on funding and support so that they are able to strictly focus on the training required to ultimately reach the podium.

Investing

Researchers have found that many countries have invested great deals of resources in high performance sport (cf. Bergsgard, Houlihan, Mangset, Nødland, & Rommetvedt, 2007; De Bosscher et al., 2006; Houlihan & Green, 2008; Thibault & Harvey, 2013). Investments in high performance sport have been justified because of successful international sport performances' connection to "international prestige and diplomatic recognition, ideological competition and a belief that international sporting success generates domestic political benefits ranging from the rather nebulous 'feel good factor' to more concrete economic impacts associated with the hosting of elite competitions" (Houlihan & Green, 2008, p. 2). Along similar lines, in the Canadian context, Brisson (2003) recommended additional funds be invested by the federal

government in “high performance programming” (p. 51) and “priority sports” and “athletes with podium potential” (p. 52) should be identified because investing in elite athletes and Canada’s sport system will lead to positive impacts on international results. Brisson’s (2003) report was instrumental in the development of the Own the Podium strategy and the identification of priority sports and athletes with the potential to achieve podium results at Olympic and Paralympic Games. The identification of priority sports and athletes led to discussions of ‘targeting’ as explained in the following section.

Targeting

When Canada developed their new high performance sport strategy in 2003, they recommended that a targeting strategy be implemented for classifying national sports and athletes (Brisson, 2003). Brisson (2003), suggested that Canada should mimic what other top sport nations were already doing by using the medal count at Olympic and Paralympic Games to evaluate athlete success. It was recognized that a new strategy involving targeting and funding allocation was needed in order for Canada to achieve successful results at international events (Brisson, 2003).

Little research exists today on using a targeting approach within the high performance sport sector. Sam (2012) addressed the concept of targeting within New Zealand and provided insight on how this strategy can be implemented into a high performance sport system. Sam (2012) argued that a targeting system is a financially responsible way to evaluate the value of the investments being made in high performance sports and athletes. Having a targeted strategy in place eliminates the issue of spreading resources too thin by investing in only select sports (Sam, 2012). Although many nations

are developing a high performance sport strategy based on targeting, there are still major implications of this strategy.

One noted implication is that by funding only select sports, the risk of upsetting or potentially angering those individuals and sports that are not targeted or funded is increased (Sam, 2012). This was evident with Canadian Olympian, Jessica Zelinka, who no longer benefits from OTP-recommended funding and support leading into the 2016 Games (Harrison, 2012). Zelinka who was previously funded, competed for Canada in both the heptathlon and 100-metre hurdles at the London 2012 Games where she finished in seventh-place in both events (Harrison, 2012). Research today does not explore the possible side effects removing funding from previously targeted individuals has on athletes. Another implication with using a targeting strategy is that it is possible that collaboration between and among various NSOs is limited due to targeting and the fact that national teams are essentially competing against one another for funding (Sam, 2012).

One lingering issue exists around the topic of targeting and is based on the idea of whether or not investments should be allocated to top ranked athletes or used to help the development level athletes improve (Sam, 2012). Development level carded athletes are younger individuals who have the potential to reach the senior national team one day in their respective sport (Sport Canada, 2012). Funding development level athletes helps to provide them with proper training, coaching, and competitive opportunities (Sport Canada, 2012). It has become apparent that Canada needs a targeted approach in order to stay competitive at the international level.

A comprehensive report was developed by Priestner Allinger and Allinger (2004), which outlined the proposed recommendations for OTP 2010, in regards to funding allocations based on a targeted approach. Leading up to the 2010 Vancouver Olympic Winter Games, investment decisions were made based on the sports' contribution to the following criteria: "Canadian sport culture, Olympic success in past three games, medal potential for 2010, and sustainability post 2010" (Priestner Allinger & Allinger, 2004, p. 382). The outcome of the original targeting strategy resulted in three different types of classes including; flat ice sports, snow sports, and sports needing specialized facilities. These targeting strategies ultimately led to the development of three different tiers that would be used for recommendations about funding allocations (Priestner Allinger & Allinger, 2004). According to Priestner Allinger and Allinger (2004), the three tiers were categorized by must win, high priority, and targeted athletes.

The first tier of must win included sports that were strongly associated to Canadian culture that had a history of success (Priestner Allinger & Allinger, 2004). The second tier listed as high priority, included sports that were less prominent in Canadian sport culture but were still considered potential medalists. The final tier, targeted athletes, consisted of sports that were long shots but had the ability to produce an unexpected medal at the Games (Priestner Allinger, & Allinger, 2004). To date, there is little literature written on high performance sport strategies and the targeting approaches that are in place across various countries (cf. Houlihan & Zheng, 2013; Sam, 2012). There is even less research within the field when it comes to Canada and their high performance sport system involving tiering and targeting. This study aims to understand the impact

that OTP-recommended funding and support has on Canada's athletes in regards to their performances, from the athletes' perspective.

International Comparison of High Performance Sport Strategies

This section focuses on a comparison of international high performance sport as it pertains to funding and various systems. There are several countries that currently invest significant levels of funding into national sports and/or athletes within their high performance sport system (cf. Baka, 2006; Houlihan & Zheng 2013; Sam, 2012). Even though a substantial level of funding is being invested, this does not always translate into an improvement in the medal standings. Considerable levels of funding are required to simply maintain the same spot in the medal tables as more and more countries are investing in high performance sport (Houlihan & Zheng, 2013). For example, at the 2004 Olympic Games, Spain won a total of 19 medals and finished 20th in the medal standings. In 2005, Spain increased their overall investment in high performance sport from €73.2 million to €94.1 million in 2011. At the 2012 Olympic Games, Spain won 17 medals and dropped in the medal standings to 21st (Houlihan & Zheng, 2013).

According to Green and Oakley (2001), countries are targeting their resources towards athletes who have the greatest chance of achieving success on the world stage. Houlihan and Zheng (2013), suggest that the development of a high performance sport strategy, which aids in identifying nations' top athletes, is required from any country that wants to contend for a top spot in any international competition. Houlihan and Zheng (2013) also believe that increasing levels of funding to support the athletes is one of the most significant factors for success. This increased level in funding directly benefits the athletes as this financial support allows them the ability to be able to train full-time

(Houlihan & Zheng, 2013). For example, Canadian wrestler, Leah Callahan, was fortunate enough to receive additional funding through the Fuelling Athlete and Coaching Excellence program (Myers, 2012). This financial support originating from Petro-Canada allowed Callahan to train full-time leading up to the 2012 Olympic Games. According to Myers (2012), Callahan was given \$4,000, which was used for basic needs such as rent and food.

Many countries have seen the benefit of investing into high performance sport with an aim to impact their overall results at an Olympic Games. According to Houlihan and Zheng (2013), Norway saw an improvement between their results at the 1998 Winter Olympic Games and the 2010 Olympic Winter Games. At the 1998 Olympic Winter Games, Norway earned a total of 5 medals and finished 12th in the medal standings. Leading into the 1998 Winter Olympic Games Norway had invested only €2 million into their high performance sport system. By 2010, Norway had increased their funding levels by investing €14 million into their high performance athletes. This increase in funding helped contribute to Norway's 23 medals and 4th place finish in the medal standings at the 2010 Olympic Winter Games (Houlihan & Zheng, 2013). Ireland also made the decision to increase their investment in high performance sport after their results at the 2000 Olympic Games. At these Games, Ireland won only a single silver medal and finished in 64th place in the medal standings. In 2000, Ireland was only investing €2 million into their high performance sport sector. During the four years leading up to the 2010 Olympic Winter Games Ireland increased their funding levels to €6.5 million per year. This increase in funding helped contribute to Ireland's improved results at the 2012

Olympic Games where they earned five medals and finished 41st in the medal standings (Houlihan & Zheng, 2013).

An evaluation has previously been completed on OTP by Lawrie and Corbett (2011) where respondents were asked to identify specific areas that they felt Canadian athletes were behind when compared to other sport nations. According to Lawrie and Corbett (2011), the purpose of the evaluation was “to determine external stakeholders’ perspectives on the impact, effectiveness, and progress of OTP since its inception in 2004” (p. 2). Respondents for this particular study included 42 organizations including former or currently targeted NSOs, Canadian Sport Centres (CSCs), and a few Multi-Sport Organizations (MSOs) that were closely connected to OTP (Lawrie & Corbett, 2011). In addition, there were 111 individual respondents who participated in the evaluation study. These individuals included both athletes and coaches who are or once were, linked to OTP (Lawrie & Corbett, 2011).

An overwhelming 81% of the respondents felt the number one area Canada needed improvement in order to be able to remain competitive with other countries was funding (Lawrie & Corbett, 2011). This survey depicts the need Canada has for strategies such as OTP if, as a nation, it wants to continue to be a dominant country in sport. When comparing Canada to other countries in terms of the amount invested into their high performance sport programs, Canada is still well behind the leaders. According to Lawrie and Corbett (2011), Canada’s investment into their high performance sport program was valued between \$235-300 million. This amount may seem impressive, however when compared to other powerful nations such as Russia (\$880M), France (\$750M), and Germany (\$321M), Canada is well behind (Lawrie & Corbett, 2011).

To date, research on elite athlete funding and high performance sport systems can be found on various countries including Australia (cf. Baka, 2006; Brisson, 2003; Hogan & Norton, 2000). A need to support high performance Australian athletes was recognized after a disastrous performance at the 1976 Montreal Olympic Games, where Australia failed to win a gold medal (Hogan & Norton, 2000). Similar to OTP, Australia committed to the use of a targeted approach and, as a result, selected only eight sports to which they would direct their funding towards. Following the 1976 Montreal Games, the targeted approach in regards to the allocation of funding proved to be successful by helping contribute to approximately 73% of Australia's total Olympic medals between the years of 1988 to 2000 (Jackson, 2006). Implementing a high performance sport targeting approach within Australia also had the power to increase participation rates, national pride, and an overall interest in sport in general (Hogan & Norton, 2000). According to Hogan and Norton (2000), providing high performance athletes with adequate funding and resources ultimately leads to an increase in their overall performance. Other countries are continuing to alter and improve their high performance sport strategies in order to increase their success at the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

New Zealand provides an example of a country that has begun to invest in their elite athletes after realizing the importance of having a successful sport nation. Between the years of 2000 and 2001, New Zealand invested only \$2 million in their high performance sport system. Since this time, a significant improvement was made; for example, between the years of 2008 and 2009, a total of \$73 million was invested into the sport system (Sam, 2012). According to Sam (2012), this substantial increased funding

greatly reflects the costs associated with sustaining a competitive edge over other powerful sport nations.

According to Sam (2012), New Zealand has developed a targeting approach similar to Canada and Australia, where sports with athletes who are perceived as having opportunities to win a medal, receive priority funding. Sam (2012) also acknowledges the fact that it is difficult to distinguish whether or not New Zealand's international success is a direct result of the targeting approach or whether it is simply because more funding is being invested into high performance sport. Sam (2012) suggests that there are issues related to implementing a targeted approach to high performance sport. As Sam (2012) explains, it becomes increasingly difficult to remove funding from targeted sports because doing so would mean that the government is recognizing a failed policy. As well, if funding is continually invested into an organization that is not performing at their best, this could potentially be interpreted that a targeting approach is a poor decision in a policy system (Sam, 2012).

Funding Within High Performance Sport

This section reviews the various sources of funding that are available to Canada's high performance athletes.

Funding Support

The first attempt to fund Canada's athletes was made originally in 1970 (Thibault & Babiak, 2013). This funding initiative was intended for student athletes who were competing at a national or international level for Canada and as a result the Canadian Olympic Committee provided athletes with a small yearly stipend (Thibault & Babiak, 2013). In 1971, a program known as Intensive Care was implemented to fund only select

athletes who were deemed to have the best chance of winning a medal at the 1972 Olympic Games (Beamish & Borowy, 1987, 1988; Macintosh, Bedecki, & Franks, 1987). Early targeting attempts were also made within Canada in preparation for the 1976 Olympic Games through the Game Plan '76 initiative. Previous research has been conducted in 1992, 1997, 2004, 2009, and 2014 for Sport Canada by Ekos Research Associates using survey questionnaires on the status of the Canadian high performance athlete (Ekos Research Associates, 2015). Results from athletes' responses to the 2009 survey indicated that 70% of them felt that Sport Canada's AAP was their most crucial source of funding (Ekos Research Associates, 2010).

Results from the most recent 2014 survey demonstrated similar feelings with three in four athletes relying on AAP as their biggest funding source. Not all athletes indicated money as an obstacle, which restrains them from focusing on their sport; however, some respondents feel that their financial situation negatively affects their performances when compared to their competitors from other countries (Ekos Research Associates, 2010). 22% of athletes responded to the most recent 2014 survey indicating that their financial situation stands as a barrier for them to compete internationally (Ekos Research Associates, 2015). Results from the athlete survey indicate that sport-related expenses are less than previous years (Ekos Research Associates, 2015). Ekos Research Associates (2015) credited a drop in expenses as a result of the implementation of OTP who provides funding recommendations which contributes in part to assisting targeted athletes with sport-related expenses.

Research from the 2009 Ekos survey suggests that there is a need for an increase in funding Canada's high performance athletes (Ekos Research Associates, 2010).

Results indicated that only 27% of athletes felt that the financial support they were currently receiving was adequate for a high performance athlete (Ekos Research Associates, 2010). The 2014 survey had similar findings with only 24% of athletes believing they receive adequate financial support as a high performance athlete (Ekos Research Associates, 2015). Funding issues in regards to having a targeted and tiered funding system in place within Canada were investigated to understand the athletes' own opinions about the matter. Athlete respondents felt that those who were considered as non-targeted were limited in terms of their competitions when compared to targeted athletes. This belief was due to the fact that targeted athletes were receiving more funds (Ekos Research Associates, 2010). Athletes who participated in a non-targeted sport believed that finances hindered their performances in terms of access to coaches, training, and competitions.

As well, summer sport athletes also felt undervalued in regards to their current financial support in various areas such as competition, living expenses, and sport medicine resources (Ekos Research Associates, 2010). Based on athlete survey results respondents indicated that, in order to remain competitive with other top sport nations, Canada needs to ensure a substantial amount of funding and support is provided to high performance athletes (Ekos Research Associates, 2010). When compared to results from a previous survey completed in 2004, results indicate that funding within Canada's high performance sport system has improved. An example of this is in regards to AAP funding, and how the monthly AAP stipend provided directly to athletes increased in September 2004 (Ekos Research Associates, 2010). However since 2004 there has been no increase in the AAP funding.

Athlete Assistance Program (AAP)

The AAP is one of the initiatives currently in place to help provide financial support to Canada's high performance athletes. Athletes who are deemed eligible and approved by Sport Canada who receive funding through the AAP are called carded athletes (Sport Canada, 2012). According to Sport Canada (2012), over 1,800 athletes across over 80 different sports are approved for AAP funding every year (2012). Even though these athletes receive AAP funding every year, 25% of carded athletes believe they needed the funding earlier in their career (Ekos Research Associates, 2015). The current level of AAP funding varies depending on the athletes' carding. Individuals who are given a senior card are eligible to receive \$1,500/month, which can be used towards living and training expenses. Athletes who are given a senior card for the very first time are only eligible to receive \$900/month for the first year.

As for athletes who are carded at the development level, they also receive \$900/month from Sport Canada (Sport Canada, 2012). These funding levels have remained consistent since they were originally increased in September 2004 (Ekos Research Associates, 2010). High performance athletes within Canada are also eligible for additional benefits such as support for tuition fees at Canadian educational institutions. For example, every year an athlete is carded, he/she is eligible for \$5,000 up to a maximum of \$25,000 to be used at any Canadian university or college (Sport Canada, 2012). Results from the 2014 athlete survey demonstrate that 54% of athletes have previously, or are currently, benefitting from the AAP in regards to assisting with their post-secondary education related expenses (Ekos Research Associates, 2015).

Many athletes still find themselves struggling with insufficient funds available. Research suggests that athletes believe that training expenses should be the top factor in determining the level of AAP funding each athlete receives (Ekos Research Associates, 2010). Jackson (2006) argued however that AAP funding provides carded athletes with sufficient funding needed for living expenses. Jackson (2006) stated that student athletes in 2004 recorded an average income of more than \$20,000. This funding along with tuition support provided to the athletes is well above the average of the reported \$12,200 income average of non-carded Canadian post-secondary students (Jackson, 2006). Results from the most recent 2014 athlete survey indicate that carded athletes had an average income of \$25,616 (Ekos Research Associates, 2015). Contrary to what Jackson (2006) argued, Canadian high performance carded athletes are still finding this an insufficient amount of funding (Ekos Research Associates, 2015). According to Ekos Research Associates (2015), athletes reported an average of \$3,378 in expenses per month. When considering the average income of \$25,616 this still leaves carded athletes short on funding by almost \$15,000 each year (Ekos Research Associates, 2015).

AAP is often criticized for having the same program in place for both Olympic and Paralympic athletes. According to Jackson (2006), Paralympians' needs should be addressed due to their unique training and competition circumstances that require additional costs. Paralympic athletes often require additional support staff to travel alongside with them depending on their class. As well, the majority of these athletes have far fewer opportunities to obtain sponsorship opportunities when compared to their Olympic counterparts (Jackson, 2006). For these and many other reasons, Paralympians

are at a disadvantage in terms of funding and require additional financial support than Olympians in many cases.

B2ten

A few high performance Canadian athletes are fortunate enough to receive additional funding support through B2ten. Athletes, who are funded through B2ten, receive training and competition support for needed services in order to achieve success in international events. There is little literature or information today on this particular company and the exact funding amounts it provides the various Canadian athletes. Founded by Dominick Gauthier, Jennifer Heil, and JD Miller, B2ten has been funding Canadian Olympians since 2005 (B2ten, 2013c). Today, B2ten currently supports 23 different Canadian Olympic athletes including: 12 in summer sports, and 11 in winter sports (B2ten, 2013a). B2ten is privately funded by many individual donors across Canada who are passionate supporters of sport and believe the positive impact it can have on a healthy lifestyle (B2ten, 2013b).

With support from various donors, B2ten strives to identify what Canada's top athletes' needs are in order to improve their performances and results, and make it happen (CBC News, 2013). Any stress that an athlete has can ultimately hinder his/her ability to perform to the best of his/her ability. The strong impact that stress can have on an athlete is fully recognized by B2ten and they work tirelessly to ensure that these stressors are minimized or eliminated, especially when it comes to funding. B2ten does not only focus on the current lifestyle of an athlete, they also dedicate their time to help educate Canada's high performance athletes so that they are able to transition into the real world

more smoothly following their career as an athlete (CBC News, 2013). B2ten supports a select group of Canadian Olympians; none of those athletes however, are Paralympians.

Canadian Athletes Now Fund (CAN Fund)

Another opportunity known as Canadian Athletes Now Fund (CAN Fund) is in existence today to help increase the financial support needed from Canada's high performance athletes. The fund was originally founded back in 1997 by former track athlete, Jane Roos and was known as the "See You In Fund" at the time (Canadian Athletes Now Fund, 2012b). At 19 years old, Roos was involved in a serious car accident, which resulted in her being unable to compete in the sport of track and field. Not wanting to leave behind her passion for sport, Roos began committing her time to helping amateur athletes and created what is now known as the CAN Fund (Canadian Athletes Now Fund, 2012c). Today, CAN Fund has raised over \$11 million to help financially support Canadian athletes. All donations made to the fund go directly to the selected Canadian athletes to help offset any costs incurred related to their training, travel, living, and various support services (Canadian Athletes Now Fund, 2012a). All Olympic and Paralympic athletes are eligible to apply and those who have their application approved may receive up to \$12,000 a year to cover expenses (Canadian Athletes Now Fund, 2012a). This program is one of the few opportunities that Canadian high performance athletes have to receive additional financial support as they continue their journeys to the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Canadian Olympic Committee (COC) Rewards

The COC has a program put in place that rewards Canadian Olympians for successful performances at international competitions. The rewards program was

originally implemented back in 1997 and saw 315 Canadian athletes earn a cash bonus for their successful performances resulting in top eight finishes in the world (Jackson, 2006). Today, Canada provides their athletes with an additional incentive to bring home a medal at the Olympic Games. Athletes who are successful in doing so are rewarded with the following cash amounts; \$20,000 for gold, \$15,000 for silver, and \$10,000 for a bronze medal (Lawrie & Corbett, 2011). To some, this may seem like a significant bonus however the reality is this is far less than many of the nations' top competitors. Russia heavily rewards their athletes by providing an additional \$300,000 for a gold medal, \$187,000 for silver, and \$123,000 for bronze (Lawrie & Corbett, 2011). South Korea provides incentives of \$160,000 for gold, \$52,000 for silver, and \$31,000 for a bronze medal (Lawrie & Corbett, 2011).

Not only are these countries providing their athletes with better rewards than Canada but they are also funding their bronze medalists to a greater degree than Canada funds its gold medal Olympians. Unlike the COC, the CPC does not currently have a reward or incentive program in place for the athletes (Jackson, 2006). The Paralympic Games draw three times the amount of medals compared to the Olympic Games, thus making it impossible to currently reward athletes with the limited funding budget available to the CPC (Jackson, 2006). The Paralympic Games are not as visible or financially supported as the Olympic Games and as a result, there is not currently enough funds in place to support such a cash for medals program for Paralympians (Thibault & Babiak, 2013).

Sufficient Funding Amounts

Jackson (2006), questioned whether or not Canadian athletes are being well supported and receive adequate amounts of funding. This study focused specifically on understanding the impact OTP-recommended funding and support through their NSO had on various Olympian and Paralympian athletes through their own perspective and experiences. High performance athletes incur various expenses during their training and competitions leading up to world championships, as well as Olympic or Paralympic Games. Jackson (2006), also questioned whether or not an athlete's financial support is sufficient enough to cover such expenses while leaving them enough time to adequately train to reach the podium.

According to Thibault and Babiak (2013), several Canadian athletes have reported concerns in regards to their financial situations while training and competing internationally for their country. Results from the Ekos Research Associates (2015) athlete survey indicate that one in five carded athletes have incurred personal debt while training and competing for Canada. 56% of carded athletes reported borrowing money from family members, while 49% indicated they rely heavily on their credit card loans (Ekos Research Associates, 2015). According to Ekos Research Associates (2015), financial issues among carded athletes are a major reason many retire prematurely from their sport. Results from the most recent 2014 survey saw 50% of coaches who responded indicate that they believe athletes retire before they even reach their full potential in their respective sport (Ekos Research Associates, 2015). Additional support is often needed to allow for Canada's high performance athletes to focus on their training and put everything they have into the year leading up to an Olympic or Paralympic

Games (Jackson, 2006). Thibault and Babiak (2013), suggested that even with the available resources of today, Canada's high performance athletes still need an increase in their overall funding amount.

To date, little scholarly writing has been written on targeting funding decisions for Canada's high performance athletes. For the most part, literature includes explanations surrounding funding allocations required to be successful on the world stage and explanations outlining current investments in the high performance sport system. Any current evidence on athletes' experiences of being a targeted athlete originates solely from media accounts. The athletes' voices and experiences have not previously been explored in research. This study was exploratory in nature and described the experiences of athletes who were targeted by OTP during their sport career leading up to or during an Olympic or Paralympic Games.

Chapter III – Research Methods

This qualitative study explored how athletes described their experiences of benefitting from Own the Podium (OTP)-recommended funding and support through their national sport organization (NSO) leading up to, and during an Olympic or Paralympic Games. As well, this study explored the impact OTP-recommended funding and support had on the athletes' individual training and performances during their career. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), this type of research is referred to as a basic qualitative study and the purpose "is to understand how people make sense of their lives and their experiences" (p. 24). The goal of this research was to develop a descriptive understanding of what it was like to be a targeted athlete benefitting from OTP-recommended funding and support. Basic qualitative research was best suited for this study given the desire to express the voices of the athletes as they pertain to the phenomenon under study. The subject of OTP-recommended funding and support has never been fully explored until now through this exploratory research.

Creswell (2013) outlines how important it is for policy makers to be aware of common experiences. This study has the ability to help leaders of OTP by providing them with insights into the experiences of the athletes they have funded and supported, which may have an impact on their current policy and targeting strategy. This research approach focused on the athletes' first hand experiences of the phenomenon under study and aimed to uncover any similarities between participants in how they described the impact OTP-recommended funding and support had on their training and performances. Interviews with the athletes were conducted to gain a better understanding of how participants felt about benefitting from OTP-recommended funding and support through their NSO.

Research Paradigm

Patton (2002) defines a paradigm as “a worldview-a way of thinking about and making sense of the complexities of the real world” (p. 69). As a researcher, the paradigm that is most suited for this research is an interpretive worldview. An examination was conducted on the experiences of athletes in regards to OTP-recommended funding and support through an interpretive point of view. Tracy (2013) outlines that interpretivists develop an understanding from multiple points of view and multiple participants. Insight into the athletes’ experiences who have previously benefitted from OTP-recommended funding and support through their NSO was gained through interviews involving multiple participants. In order to understand the athletes’ experiences about OTP-recommended funding and support, research involved the process of in-depth interviews with 11 targeted athletes. Having an interpretive worldview challenged the researcher to fully examine the world from the eyes of the Canadian high performance athletes within the study (Tracy, 2013). Examining the world through the participants’ eyes was crucial in the understanding of athletes’ experiences in regards to benefitting from OTP-recommended funding and support through their NSO.

Currently, no research on the direct perceptions of Canadian athletes and their feelings and perspectives about benefitting from OTP-recommended funding and support through their NSO has been undertaken. One way to truly understand athlete experiences is by striving to see the world through their own eyes and to determine the level, nature, and scope that the recommended funding and support has had on the athletes leading up to and including their participation in an Olympic or Paralympic Games. Tracy (2013) states that the focus of the interpretive paradigm is “making sense of the scene from the

participants' point of view – examining not only behaviors but intentions and emotions” (p. 48). Through the research process, it was key to examine each athlete's experiences that were directly connected or related to OTP-recommended funding and support. Analyzing the emotional connection an athlete has in association to benefitting from OTP-recommended funding and support through their NSO was critical in understanding their overall experiences. The basis of this research was rooted from the interest in exploring Canada's OTP targeted athlete's experiences leading up to and including their participation in Olympic or Paralympic Games. With this study's focus, it can be concluded that the interpretive paradigm was the best-suited perspective.

Participant Sample and Selection

Securing an appropriate sample for the study began with contacting leaders within OTP and the Canadian Sport Institutes (CSIs) organizations to obtain a list of athletes who have previously been recommended for funding and support by the organization. The sample size for my research was 11 athletes, all who benefitted from OTP-recommended funding and support through their NSO for a minimum of one year (see Table 1).

Table 1 Research Participants²

Participant	Gender	Games Attended O=Olympics P=Paralympics	Funding	Season	Current Status
1	Female	O: 2004, 2008, 2012	Continuous	Summer	Retired
2	Female	O: 2008, 2012	Lost	Summer	Current
3	Female	O: 2008, 2012	Continuous	Summer	Current
4	Female	O: 2004, 2008, 2012	Continuous	Summer	Retired
5	Female	O: 2008	Lost	Summer	Retired
6	Female	P: 2006, 2010, 2014	Continuous	Winter	Current
7	Female	P: 2004, 2008, 2012	Continuous	Summer	Current
8	Female	P: 1998, 2002, 2010	Continuous	Winter	Retired
9	Male	O: 2000, 2004, 2008, 2012	Continuous	Summer	Retired
10	Female	O: 2010, 2014	Continuous	Winter	Current
11	Female	O: 2006, 2010, 2014	Continuous	Winter	Retired

Athletes who had not received funding and support for a full year were not eligible for this study as they may not have had enough time to fully experience all of the areas of support services that OTP offers to their targeted sports and athletes. The average age of the 11 athletes who participated in the study was 35 years old. The selection of participants was based on a maximum variation sample strategy which allows a researcher to “access a wide range of data or participants who will represent wide variations of the phenomena under study” (Tracy, 2013 p. 135). This study focused on recruiting six different types of athletes who have previously benefitted from OTP-

² Unfortunately further details on the participants' backgrounds are not provided in order to ensure confidentiality.

recommended funding and support through their NSO. These six groups included: winter athletes, summer athletes, Olympians, Paralympians, males, and females. Unfortunately, there was not an equal gender representation within the study as 10 participants were females and only one was a male athlete. Other males were initially contacted during the recruiting process however chose not to participate or failed to schedule an interview.

A total of six retired athletes who previously benefitted from OTP-recommended funding and support through their NSO were recruited for this study. As well, the sample included a combination of athletes who were either successful or unsuccessful at an Olympic or Paralympic Games with winning a medal for Canada. I also recruited two athletes who lost their targeted status by OTP following the renewal process at one point during their athletic career. Using a maximum variation sample helped to understand the experiences of each individual, as well as common themes across the wide range of participants (Patton, 2002). Patton (2002) states, “any common patterns that emerge from great variation are of particular interest and value in capturing the core experiences and central, shared dimensions of a setting or phenomenon” (p. 235). As a result, this particular type of sample was best suited for my research, as I was seeking to understand the experiences of the various athletes who have previously benefitted from OTP-recommended funding and support through their NSO.

Recruiting Strategies

To be eligible to participate in this study, individuals needed to be 18 years of age or older and have benefitted from OTP-recommended funding and support through their NSO during their athletic career. To secure participants, I obtained, from leaders of OTP, a list of individual athletes who have received OTP-recommended funding and support

through their NSO during their career. With the help of the CSIs Athlete Services Managers, athletes from the list were contacted and sent the letter of invitation to participate in the study. This sample was small in size and for recruiting purposes needed to be expanded. The CSIs assisted in contacting other athletes within their institutes who had experience through their NSO with benefitting from OTP-recommended funding and support. According to OTP (2014a), the CSI Network is a close partner who works “closely with the targeted sports through the provision of services and programs for athletes and coaches” (para. 1). The CSI Network includes seven different centres throughout Canada who support Canada’s national athletes and coaches (Own the Podium, 2014a).

Together, OTP and the CSIs ultimately determined the potential participants of this study. This research included convenience sampling by utilizing the two organizations to assist with the recruitment portion of the study. A limitation of this type of sampling is the possibility that athletes who participated in the study may have had a closer relationship with either of these organizations and be bias. Given the goal of this research and the time frame, a convenience sample was best suited for the purpose of this study in order to recruit a very select group of athletes (Tracy, 2013). The participants in this study were Canada’s high performance athletes. Through a connection to CSI Pacific, I initially recruited eligible athletes who are from or train in, the province of British Columbia. Participants included a wide range of athletes who represented various geographical areas across Canada (e.g., Alberta, British Columbia, Ontario). In order to reach out and contact the remaining athletes across the country, I connected with the other CSIs as they served as a gatekeeper in the study. A gatekeeper, according to Tracy

(2013), is an individual or organization that “has the power to grant access” (p. 71). The CSIs were utilized to initiate contact with the participants to determine if they were willing to participate in the study.

Another primary gatekeeper in this study was the OTP organization. CSI Pacific has a close working relationship to OTP and as such it is possible to connect directly with senior staff within OTP. In this case, the OTP senior staff acted as the gatekeeper as they were the individuals responsible for providing names of some of the targeted athletes during the early stages of the research process. As well, I acquired a letter from OTP acknowledging the fact that they were supporting the research. This letter was sent to athletes encouraging them to participate in my study.

Data Collection Process

In-depth Interviews

For this research, data were collected through the method of in-depth interviews. In order to fully understand the experiences of Canada's high performance athletes who have benefitted from OTP-recommended funding and support through their NSO, semi-structured interviews were undertaken. Although specific questions were identified to ask of all athletes involved in the study (Appendix B), the actual interviews unfolded as semi-structured. According to Tracy (2013), interviews are very powerful when gathering information from your participant as they provide insights into their rationales, explanations, and justifications for their opinions on a specific research topic. It is difficult to observe the actual impact that OTP-recommended funding and support has had on Canada's targeted athletes. As a result, interviews were used as the primary data collection method to provide an in-depth understanding on a topic that cannot be directly

observed (Tracy, 2013). Data were collected from participants who have personally benefited from OTP-recommended funding and support through their NSO before and were developed to describe the participant's experiences with the particular phenomenon (Creswell, 2013).

The primary methods for a researcher to consider when conducting interviews include structured, unstructured, and semi-structured interviews. Structured interviews are generally scripted in a standardized manner and allow for minimal flexibility whereas, unstructured interviews contain questions that are dynamic in nature and include probes leading to a more stimulating discussion (Tracy, 2013). For this study, I utilized a semi-structured interview approach where an interview script was used to guide the interviews. Semi-structured interviews allowed me to further understand the athletes' experiences by having a strong interview guide with the ability to adapt questions and focus on emerging themes.

An interview guide (Appendix A) was utilized to help with the overall structure and format of the interviews. Questions for the interview guide were decided upon following an extensive review of the literature. Possible topic areas were then discussed with the thesis supervisor to assist in determining the various questions to ask the athletes. Ultimately the questions used in the interview guide were finalized based on the research questions and the overall goal of the study. The guide allowed for more flexible questions that could be adapted to fit the various participants (Tracy, 2013). This flexibility encouraged athletes to elaborate further on their own unique experiences with the recommended funding and support they have received. The purpose of the research was explained at the start of each interview and the researcher provided details regarding

their own background with the athletes. The first interview questions focused on gathering background information on the athletes and gave the participants time to feel at ease with the process. Not all questions on the interview guide were asked to all athletes depending on each participants' experience and how the interview unfolded. In some cases, the open ended questions resulted in a response that directly or indirectly answered other questions in the interview guide.

Pre-planning the interview construct beforehand is crucial in contributing to the success of the research. According to Tracy (2013), a researcher may need to obtain approval from the gatekeeper before beginning initial interviews. With this type of research, I acquired a letter of support for the study from the OTP organization as they were considered one of the gatekeepers in this study. Additionally, informed consent was required from all participants prior to conducting the scheduled interviews. The consent form (Appendix B) was in writing and emailed to all participants explaining the "purposes, procedures, and planned outcomes of the research" (Tracy, 2013, p. 89).

Upon receiving informed consent back from the participants I proceeded to begin scheduling the interviews. This study used both face-to-face interviews as well as mediated interviews lasting between 45 to 60 minutes in length. A quasi pilot study was conducted for the first interview where the supervisor was present. The various codes and themes that emerged from the participants' interview were also reviewed by the supervisor. A total of four interviews were conducted with the athletes face-to-face in a preferred location of their choice. My first preference was to conduct face-to-face interviews as nonverbal cues have the potential to become apparent in this type of setting (Tracy, 2013). According to Tracy (2013), face-to-face interviews may be difficult to

arrange due to a number of factors including cost, participants with a disability, and geographical proximity. As a result, mediated interviews were also utilized for those participants who were unable to meet in person. Mediated interviews, according to Tracy (2013), can be defined as “interviews that do not occur face to face, but rather via technological media such as a telephone, a computer, or other hand-held device” (p. 163). For the purpose of this study, six mediated interviews were conducted through the use of a computer via Skype software. Only a single athlete participated in an interview that was conducted over the phone. Using the method of mediated interviews helped reduce costs as well as allowed for a wider selection of athletes across Canada who otherwise would be unable to participate in my research (Tracy, 2013).

Digital Audio Recording

All interviews throughout the study were recorded digitally after consent from the athletes was provided. Tracy (2013) states that in the early stages of data analysis, it is beneficial to listen to the participants' voice recordings multiple times. Using a digital recorder allows both the researcher and participant to focus on the interview at hand rather than being distracted by writing all verbal content. All participants were asked for consent for the interview to be digitally recorded at the beginning of each interview. The interviewees were also advised that any audio-recorded material was to be used for the research only and deleted following the completion of the study.

Transcribing

Transcription was used to aid in the analysis of data after the interviews had been digitally recorded. Tracy (2013) describes transcribing as the process of “creating typewritten records from audio recordings” (p. 177). All interviews were transcribed

verbatim in Microsoft Word and provided to all participants in the study to review for accuracy. A total of 179 single-spaced pages were ultimately transcribed from the 11 interviews. The participants were given the opportunity to review the transcript and clarify any necessary areas that were discussed; this process is known as a member check (Creswell, 2013). This approach was used to give the athletes a chance to either expand on details of their experiences or, to clarify any points they felt may have been misunderstood during the interview. I helped familiarize myself with the data through the process of fact checking which involved reading over each transcript while also listening to the audio-recorded version at the same time to ensure for accuracy (Tracy, 2013). Doing so, allowed me to correct any potential inaccuracies that were misheard during the initial transcription process. Listening and reading over each transcript multiple times allowed me to begin the process of identifying preliminary themes that were raised within the content.

Limitations

A significant limitation of this study is that 11 athletes may not entirely be reflective of all Olympian and Paralympian athletes who have benefitted from OTP-recommended funding and support. Given the time frame for my research project I was limited with the number of athletes who were available to be interviewed. I was also challenged to schedule interviews with these athletes due to the demand of their training and competition schedules. Another limitation of this study is that with only 11 athletes participating, only nine sports were represented in the data collected. It is possible that interviewing athletes from other sports would have led to further themes emerging based on their own unique experiences.

This study was largely represented by female athletes, with only a single male athlete participating. As a result, it was impossible to compare the distinctions between male and female athlete perspectives. Individual athletes were only included in the sample size for this research. This serves as a limitation as zero team sports were represented within the data collected. Four out of 11 interviewed athletes were from a winter sport which does not fully reflect the experiences of all targeted winter Olympians or Paralympians. The summer sports provided a larger sample with seven athletes participating in the study. Even so, this does not fully reflect the experiences and perspectives of all targeted summer sport athletes.

A limitation from this study was that only perspectives from the targeted athletes were collected in the data. There were no leaders of OTP interviewed for this research. This limits the strength of the study as OTP did not provide an insight in the rationale for decision making regarding the targeting strategy and funding allocations. Another limiting factor from this research is that no leaders of NSOs were interviewed. The leaders of NSOs may have provided an interesting perspective based on directly observing targeted athletes within their teams.

This study relied heavily on OTP and the CSIs for recruitment purposes. Utilizing a gatekeeper in this study is a limitation due to the fact these two organizations controlled to whom the letter of invitation was sent. A final limitation from this research is that a secondary coder was not used throughout the data analysis process. Having another researcher to interpret the data and review the various codes and themes may have been valuable however, given the exploratory and interpretive nature of the research, the

researcher acknowledges that some level of subjectivity is present in the interpretation of the data.

Data Analysis

All transcriptions were uploaded using computer-aided qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) to assist with the data analysis process (Tracy, 2013). According to Tracy (2013) CAQDAS provides “options for organizing, managing, coding, sorting, and reconfiguring data” (p. 204). The NVivo 10 qualitative data analysis software was chosen for the purpose of my research. Tracy (2013) suggests using CAQDAS if you have several pages to analyze to assist with the organization of material. Data for this study consisted of over 87,000 words to be read over to analyze and as a result, I decided to use the NVivo 10 software which was made available to me at Brock University. Reading over and listening to the various transcriptions gave me an idea of some of the codes and themes beforehand that had emerged in the data.

Reviewing transcriptions allowed for important statements from research participants to be created into codes and ultimately themes were decided upon based on the results of the various interviews with the athletes. Depending on the individual athletes' experience, similar codes sometimes fell under multiple themes. For example, when athletes discussed media, their experience consisted of both pressure and stress related to the exposure of media. As a result, the experiences are discussed under the themes of pressure and stress. Keeping the experiences coded under both themes allowed for the athletes' voices to be more accurately represented within the data. I began analyzing using primary-cycle coding which included examining the data numerous times and creating several nodes within the NVivo software that captured a particular

phenomenon (Tracy, 2013). This led to the creation of first-level codes which according to Tracy (2013), focuses on the “who, what, and where” (p. 189). First-level codes that emerged in the data included: pressure, expectations, funding, media, OTP name, results, stress, targeting, and two classes. Some codes were then able to be grouped together into hierarchical codes based on similar or related theoretical meanings (Tracy, 2013). Some of these hierarchical codes included; available resources, believe, missing gap, and OTP funding. The coding process also led to exemplars being identified as they emerged throughout the data (Tracy, 2013). These exemplars best described meaningful points of views made by the athletes on a particular phenomenon that reoccurred during the various interviews (see Tables 3.1 through 3.12).

Two methods were utilized including a textural description and structural description to further analyze the data. A textural description includes “what” the participants are experiencing in terms of the phenomenon and are able to be described by utilizing any significant statements that emerged within the interviews (Creswell, 2013). As for the structural description, this includes “how” the participants experienced the phenomenon under study “in terms of the conditions, situations, or context” (Creswell, 2013, p. 80). By combining a textural and structural description, I was able to uncover the essence of the phenomenon of OTP-recommended funding and support in regards to the athletes’ experiences. This description, which combines both methods of textural and structural, primarily focused on any common experiences that were present between all participants within the study (Creswell, 2013).

Quality Qualitative Research

Tracy (2013), created a criteria devised of eight different areas designed to assist in assessing the quality of qualitative research. The criteria Tracy (2013) formulated to achieve quality qualitative research includes the following eight components; worthy topic, rich rigor, sincerity, credibility, resonance, significant contribution, ethical practices, and meaningful coherence. In the following, paragraphs, the relevant components are addressed.

Worthy Topic

The first point in Tracy's (2013) criteria is whether or not the research being conducted is a worthy topic. This particular research is considered to be a worthy topic as it is an area that has not been examined in previous research. As a result, exploring the experiences of athletes who have benefitted from OTP-recommended funding and support proves to be an interesting topic. This study has the potential to make a contribution to the field of sport management where a gap in knowledge currently exists today. This research is considered to be worthy topic and timely with the next Olympic and Paralympic Games coming up in less than one year. An additional rationale for the value of this research is that OTP may be able to use results from this study concerning the athletes' viewpoints as a basis for future funding decisions and policies.

Rich Rigor

Another criteria Tracy (2013) suggests using to judge the quality of qualitative research is rigor. According to Tracy (2013), rigor can be defined as "the care and effort taken to ensure that the research is carried out in an appropriate manner" (p. 231). Rigor was achieved in this study by collecting a sufficient amount of data, including 11

different participants with various backgrounds (Tracy, 2013). Due diligence was done in this study utilizing the rigorous practice of thoroughly analyzing data for an extended period of time. Data were able to be sorted, and organized through the use of the qualitative software, NVivo 10 (Tracy, 2013).

Sincerity

According to Tracy (2013), sincerity is successfully met when the “research is genuine and vulnerable” (p. 233). The criteria of sincerity as a researcher were met for this study through two similar practices; self-reflexivity, and a self-reflective journal.

Self-Reflexivity

The role of the researcher within this qualitative study was to take care of myself while also paying attention to all of the participants (Tracy, 2013). As a qualitative researcher, one of the major roles was to be self-aware and involved in self-reflexivity. This concept entails being mindful of the ways in which one’s previous experiences, past or present roles, and views all have a direct impact on the way the researcher conducts the study (Tracy, 2013). In this particular case, my connection to the CSI Pacific may have impacted the way research was conducted. For example, through my connection to CSI, I believe that OTP and the targeting strategy implemented within Canada’s high performance system is in fact positive for elite athletes. It is possible had the research taken a more critical lens rather than interpretive that different conclusions would have been drawn from the study. As a researcher, I needed to be cognizant of any personal views I had already formed on OTP, as an organization, from their close connection to the CSI network before beginning the research process. As well, my personal experiences as a high performance athlete in ice hockey also played a role in shaping my approach to

the current study (Tracy, 2013). For example, during the interview process, I found myself able to relate to similar experiences with some athletes when discussing areas such as pressure at major events or competitions based on my own personal experiences within sport. My experience as a high performance athlete ultimately played a role in shaping my perspective and interpretation of the participants' experiences within the study. It was vital that I was aware of my own past experiences as an athlete in order to avoid bias during the interview and research process.

This is an imperative step in the role as the researcher to ensure that any biases do not lead the research in a certain way based on past experiences. The researcher's background ultimately helps shape as well as guide the entire research process (Tracy, 2013). Considering this, it was still important that I, as a researcher was well aware of my own role and previous experiences in order to acknowledge any biases and assumptions that I may have held before conducting research. This process known as *epoche* or bracketing, is a conscious effort to set aside prejudgments in order to fully understand the athletes' perspectives towards the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2013).

Self-Reflective Journal

To help myself be self-aware of my personal thoughts and feelings in regards to OTP-recommended funding and support I utilized the tool of a self-reflective journal. This mechanism allowed myself as a researcher to remain as objective as possible by incorporating the journal into my daily routine. This journal served as a place where I could express any thoughts or feelings I had in regards to interviews and the entire research process as a whole (King & Horrocks, 2010). After the conclusion of each interview I would allow time for myself to journal and reflect on the interview process,

including any strengths or weaknesses I felt were apparent. This time for reflection also allowed me to gather my own thoughts and feelings towards each interview, allowing me to make any necessary changes moving forward with the other scheduled interviews. The journal served as a place where I could write down my own interpretations of athletes' experiences so that I was aware of them. Being able to acknowledge my own interpretations allowed me to recognize any bias and as such, attempt to fully represent the athletes' voices within the results section. An example of this is, in one of the interviews, an athlete was describing how an emphasis placed on podium performances negatively affected her mental state while in competition. This particular athlete was in fourth place during a race and immediately felt disappointment as a result of not being in medal position. My personal interpretation of this scenario which I noted in my journal, was that the athlete had a weak state of mind. Based on my own personal experience as an athlete, I believed the athlete should instead have been motivated that she was so close to earning a medal and pushed on during the race. It was imperative that I make note of my own interpretation of this experience in order to fully express the voice of the athlete and not my personal opinion. For this particular athlete, the emphasis placed on podium finishes negatively affected her state of mind during a specific race. By journaling my own interpretations, I was able to express the athletes' voice within the results' section and was able to remove my own bias to the best of my ability.

After conducting several interviews I was able to further understand that the pressure in many cases was put more directly on the NSOs and coaching staff versus the individual athletes.

Credibility

Another criteria developed by Tracy (2013) to assist with the quality of qualitative research is credibility. Thick description was one of the methods used within this study to ensure that the research was considered credible. Details about the athletes' experiences in regards to benefitting from OTP-recommended funding and support have been demonstrated through representative quotations for each individual theme (see Tables 3.1 through 3.12). As mentioned previously, a member check was used for each participant. This method helped to establish credibility as it allowed the athletes an opportunity to review their interview transcript and ensure accuracy.

Resonance

Resonance is another area in Tracy's (2013) criteria designed to assist in assessing the quality of qualitative research. This particular research resonates with audiences such as the OTP organization, as the findings can potentially be transferred for policy change in the future in regards to funding allocation and recommendations. Specific findings in regards to targeting high performance athletes may also resonate across the entire sport system worldwide due to the prevalence of multiple countries implementing a sport targeting strategy.

Significant Contribution

This study proves to be a significant contribution to the field of sport management since there has been no research to date on the experiences of Canada's high performance athletes who have benefited from OTP-recommended funding and support. As a result, this research contributes to understanding how Canadian athletes feel about funding and support provided to them through this relatively new initiative, OTP.

Ethical Practices

Another characteristic Tracy (2013) suggests using to measure the quality of qualitative research is conducting ethical practices. Procedural ethics were followed for the purpose of this study by going through the process to have the research approved by the research ethics board (REB). As well, an informed consent form was developed and approved by the REB and was sent out to all of the participating athletes in the study. The informed consent that was distributed to athletes consisted of the following: the purpose of the research, data collection procedures, declaration of confidentiality, and instructions on how to withdraw from the study at any time (Tracy, 2013). This research can be considered ethical in that all interviews with the athletes were conducted in a respectful and genuine manner.

Meaningful Coherence

The last criteria point that Tracy (2013) outlines for reaching quality qualitative research is meaningful coherence. This study proved to have meaningful coherence in that it achieved the original stated purpose. The research ultimately allowed for an understanding to be developed involving the experiences of Canada's high performance athletes who have benefitted from OTP-recommended funding and support through their NSO. Tracy (2013) suggests when conducting interpretive research "that meaning emerges from the voices of participants" (p. 245). For this study the voices of the athletes were listened to regularly and ultimately guided coding and relevant themes during the data analysis process.

Chapter IV – Results and Discussion

This chapter presents the findings from the in-depth interviews undertaken regarding the experiences of Canada's high performance athletes who have benefitted from Own the Podium (OTP)-recommended funding and support leading up to or during an Olympic or Paralympic Games. The research sample included 11 athletes across nine different sport disciplines. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the experiences of these athletes based on 12 major themes that were uncovered following the analysis of the transcriptions of the participants' interviews. Some of the themes shared similar codes which led to repetition within the results (e.g., media, pressure, stress). The themes addressed in this chapter from most prominent to least as seen in Table 2 include: resources, pressure, missing gap, results, targeting, stress, expectations, boost in confidence, OTP relationship, OTP name, pre/post OTP, and lost funding.

Table 2 Themes and Codes

THEMES	CODES	
1: RESOURCES		
Sub Theme: Integrated Support Team (IST)	Sport Psychology	Physiotherapy
	Nutrition	Strength & Conditioning
	Massage Therapy	Biomechanics
	Physiology	Chiropractor
Sub Theme: Technical/Training Support	Training Camps	Technicians
	Coaching	Technology
	Equipment	Other
2. PRESSURE		
	Inner Pressure	Media Pressure
	Did Not Feel OTP Pressure	Pressure to Podium
	Felt OTP Pressure	Watching Performance
	High Performance Athlete	Other Pressure
	Previous Olympian or Paralympian	
3. MISSING GAP		
	No Salary	Equipment Expenses
	Personal Expenses	No Missing Gap
	Retirement	Additional Support Staff
	Preparation	Other
4. RESULTS		
	Impacted Results	Emphasis on Results
5. TARGETING		
	Downside to Targeting	Earned Targeting Status
	Two Classes	Other
	Agree with Targeting Strategy	
6. STRESS		
	Financial Concerns	Media Stress
	Less Stress	Previous Olympian or Paralympian
	Biggest Funding Source	High Performance Athlete
	Delayed Retirement	Other Stress
7. EXPECTATIONS		
	OTP Expectations	No Expectations
	Personal Expectations	Other Expectations
8. BOOST IN CONFIDENCE		
	Believed In	Confidence
	Prepared	Motivation
	Supported	
9. OTP RELATIONSHIP		
	Negative OTP Relationship	Positive Relationship with OTP
	No Relationship with OTP	
10. OTP NAME		
	Agree	Disagree
	Indirect Expectations	
11. PRE/POST OTP		
	Pre/Post OTP	
12. LOST FUNDING		
	Lost Funding	

Resources are comprised of two distinct components including Integrated Support Team (IST) and technical/training support. IST consists of sport science and sport medical experts (e.g., massage therapist, nutritionist, physiologist, sport psychologist) who assist the athletes in their preparation for major events or competitions.

Technical/training support consists of specific areas deemed to have the greatest impact on improving the athletes overall performance level. The theme of pressure can be defined as various internal and/or external forces that affect the athletes' mental state leading up to or training for a major competition. All athletes referenced whether or not a missing gap was evident during their sport career. These missing gaps were identified areas of support that athletes felt could enhance their performances, however due to OTP-recommended funding and support restrictions these needs could not be met.

The theme of results is directly connected to the athletes' performance outcomes at major events or competitions. The OTP targeting strategy mentioned by several athletes determines funding allocations within Canadian high performance sport. Targeting decisions made by OTP decide which sports receive funding based on their potential to achieve podium results at the Olympic and Paralympic Games. The theme of stress can be defined as factors contributing to additional or reducing pressures that the athletes face while preparing for the Olympic or Paralympic Games. Expectations are beliefs that OTP or the individual athlete has on their performance outcome at competitions or events.

The boost in confidence that athletes experienced can be described as OTP-recommended funding and support contributing to an increase in the athletes' self-esteem and belief in their own abilities to perform successfully. The OTP relationship theme is

the athletes perceptions on OTP based on their own personal experiences and interactions with leaders within the organization. In terms of the OTP name, this is related to the opinions of athletes on the name of the organization and the message the brand conveys with a strong emphasis placed on achieving podium finishes. Pre/post OTP refers to the significant differences athletes noticed after benefiting from OTP-recommended funding and support in comparison to their previous experiences before the implementation of OTP. The final theme, lost funding, is defined by athletes who have experienced the removal or reduction of funding as determined by OTP during their sport career.

Resources

Throughout the research, the transcripts of 11 different interviews with Canadian Olympic and Paralympic athletes were reviewed. These athletes discussed their personal experiences in regards to benefitting from OTP-recommended funding and support. Each participant described their own unique experiences throughout the interview process. Analyzing transcriptions from each interview led to distinct similarities and differences emerging across the various athletes. During the interview process, all athletes discussed the impact that an increase in available resources had on them while training and preparing for an Olympic or Paralympic Games. Tables 3.1 through 3.12 lists the themes, an overview of the codes found within the themes as well as sample quotations from specific athletes. The tables also include the percentage of athletes who discussed each theme and the frequency the theme was referenced during the interviews. What follows is an interpretation of the tables.

Table 3.1 Resources

Theme: Resources						
THEMES	SOURCES	FREQUENCY	CODES	SOURCES	FREQUENCY	SAMPLE QUOTATIONS
RESOURCES Sub Theme: IST	100%	128	Sport Psychology	55%	14	<i>"Just having access to a sport psychologist that I can just email or contact at any time. So before one race I was really not in a good space, I was grumpy and everything and I just kind of did this big blah on email and sent her everything and then automatically felt better. I think it's having that person there that is there to listen and understand those kind of things and you just have that." - participant 3</i>

			Nutrition	55%	9	<i>"Things like nutrition and specifically like recovering nutrition. That was a huge game-changer for me personally where I noticed the difference but also just for the whole team to be able to perform on a daily basis because we were getting the right fuel in afterwards and there's just a lot more focus put on that kind of recovery food immediately after training." - participant 4</i>
			Massage Therapy	55%	8	<i>"So a lot of it was on massage and therapy and sport psychology." - participant 5</i>

<p>Sub Theme: Technical/Training Support</p>			Physiology	45%	11	<p><i>"Like there was all this emphasis put on the aspects around training. Like the training program itself, the coach still came up with his own program based on his own expertise. But things like warm-up protocol, we had a physiologist and biomechanist, so physiological testing before and after either intense practices or we did a lot of internal testing as well and testing how quickly you recover at taking our blood samples and testing the lactic acid and how quick it takes personally each athlete to recover. And so all of a sudden you've got individualized recovery programs and you need to stay on the bike longer, oh you're fine you can start the cooling system. There was a lot more focus on those things." - participant 4</i></p>
---	--	--	------------	-----	----	---

			Physiotherapy	45%	6	<i>"So what benefited me though was that we had, one huge benefit was we were able to have really high calibre physical therapists, that was really great. Keep everyone healthy and very noticeable difference in the health once we were able to get those good people." - participant 11</i>
--	--	--	---------------	-----	---	--

			Strength & Conditioning	27%	4	<i>"So with that in mind, like creating an environment that's competitive that pushes the group to be faster but still keeping the group on a positive goal oriented trajectory, I think that all those items that we talked about with OTP providing, like with the nutrition recovery – oh I didn't mention this but we had a full-time strength training coach who we saw daily as well either for heavy lifting sessions or he had us doing this crazy core circuit twice a week that was probably just as hard if not harder than some of our workouts on the water, just because it pushed you in a different way, and muscles burning." - participant 4</i>
--	--	--	-------------------------	-----	---	---

			Biomechanics	18%	3	<i>"But for example we had an Own the Podium guy come to our month-long camp last summer in New Zealand. We were gone for 3.5 weeks, and they were doing all sorts of testing about biomechanics in terms of pulling on our handles, and the difference between our left and our right strength of our handles, with our arms. So they were with us for a month and a half." - participant 10</i>
--	--	--	--------------	-----	---	--

			Chiropractor	9%	1	<p><i>"Because we went to Beijing, we had a chef, which was a massive advantage, massive. There's three guys out of the race because they got sick. One of the guys was on the British team and they had ten times the funding we had but we had a smart impact on our funding. So we had the closest accommodation to the course, we had a chiropractor, we had a doctor, we had a massage therapist, we had a mechanic and we had a chef. We had four coaches probably – we had a full team, but everybody was awesome. They were awesome. And Own the Podium paid for it and it was an amazing use of resources." - participant 9</i></p>
--	--	--	--------------	----	---	---

			Training Camps	82%	27	<i>"Yeah. Definitely we were able to have more training camps, so enabling us to rather than skiing and being home-based in the winter having the opportunity to go and do some warm weather training camps, definitely we improved our national team culture. So that it's an environment where you do have more training partners and ability to train with people which really helps when you're doing higher volume. So I'd say the support enabled us to train better quality and higher volume." – participant 3</i>
			Coaching	45%	10	<i>"Being able to use our funding to hire really top level international coaches and bring them in." - participant 11</i>

			Equipment	45%	9	<i>"I don't remember exactly when it increased, let's say it was 2009-10 but definitely as we moved into the next quadrennial, there was a huge increase in money. I felt that we had more training camps, had more access to training equipment, access to physiologists, sports psychologists, nutrition, all these resources started to come available. And just the quality of our camps were better too, it wasn't a feeling of doing a budget project, it was like okay there was an emphasis on creating the national team offering support that was same quality as a professional team would give." - participant 3</i>
--	--	--	-----------	-----	---	---

			Technicians	27%	5	<i>"I do because it just goes back to, it's so simplistic, but it's like I for the first time in my long, long [sport] career, I got all the training that I needed, and all the time on snow that I needed and all the time with the physio that I needed, and a technician who could tune my [equipment] properly, not me trying to do it myself." - participant 8</i>
			Technology	27%	18	<i>"So it was clear that the two countries that had this massive research and development projects going on were just able to handle the rough terrain and adapt to the course a lot better than all the other countries." - participant 6</i>

			Other	18%	3	<i>"But Own the Podium gave us a grant for \$2,000, \$2,500 each for needs that helped to enhance our training. So we could spend the money wherever we wanted to. I took gymnastics lessons in the fall to work on aerodynamics, balance." - participant 10</i>
--	--	--	-------	-----	---	---

Integrated Support Team (IST)**Sport psychology.**

Six athletes indicated that OTP-recommended funding and support provided them with a greater access to resources in the area of sport psychology. For some, this was a new area that became available to them through their National Sport Organization (NSO) as a result of an increase in funding. Some athletes discussed how they had never previously worked with a sport psychologist before, or only used them intermittently prior to OTP. As a result of OTP-recommended funding and support, several athletes and their NSO gained access to a full-time sport psychologist. Each participant had their own unique experiences in regards to the extent they used their sport psychologist. Some utilized this resource before competitions, while others brought a sport psychologist to major competitions including the Olympic Games. Certain athletes felt at ease knowing that someone was made available to them to contact at any time if and when needed. Sharing concerns or issues with their respective sport psychologist resulted in athletes feeling better mentally prepared before or during major competitions.

Nutrition.

OTP-recommended funding and support gave athletes greater access to sport nutrition resources. Specifically, athletes noted that there was more of a focus on recovery nutrition than years prior to the implementation of OTP. Participant 4 noted the aspect of recovery nutrition as a “*game-changer*” in that it contributed directly to her daily performance. Having access to sport nutritionists led to these athletes being further educated on proper recovery strategies. Athletes expressed how there was more of an emphasis put on recovery and ensuring that the proper foods were being consumed

immediately after a training session. This led to athletes being fueled properly and prepared for another training session that day or the next.

Participant 9 discussed an experience in how proper nutrition greatly impacted them at a Games. This particular athlete's NSO brought their own personal chef along with the team for the entire duration of the Games. He explained how this was extremely beneficial to his performances as he witnessed athletes from other countries being unable to compete as they had fallen sick from consuming food served at the Games. By having a personal chef on site, these athletes were able to properly fuel their bodies before their competitions and avoided being sick consuming 'foreign' food.

Massage therapy.

Another valuable resource that became available to athletes as a result of OTP-recommended funding and support was the use of massage therapists. Athletes discussed how using massage therapists led to them feeling better prepared for both training and competitions. Funding allowed athletes to visit massage therapists multiple times throughout their training in preparation for an Olympic or Paralympic Games. Some explained how this enabled them to have massages more frequently than they would have been able to without the proper funding. A few athletes discussed that they also had access to massage therapists directly at the Games. This was one component that left them feeling well taken care of and helped them to focus on their competitions.

Physiology.

OTP-recommended funding and support also allowed for greater assistance in the area of physiology for the athletes. Physiologists were able to travel with various NSO teams as a result of increased funding. This led to physiologists being able to properly

monitor athletes training programs regularly during the course of a year. Depending on the sport and the athlete, individuals discussed their unique experiences in the area of physiology support that became available to them. Athletes explained that in general they felt well supported by their physiologists. Participant 3 described how she prepared for competition by using heat acclimatization protocols designed by her physiologists to assist with any environmental challenges she experienced. Participant 4 addressed how important physiological testing was to her team both before and after practices. An example given of physiological testing performed on the athletes dealt with taking blood samples from each athlete to determine individual lactic acid levels and recovery time. These tests allowed physiologists to develop individualized recovery programs based on how long lactic acid remained in the system of each athlete, which was beneficial to their individual training programs.

Physiotherapy.

Similar to massage therapy, another resource that became available to athletes was physiotherapy. OTP-recommended funding and support allowed athletes to access physiotherapists regularly during the year. Athletes expressed how they had the opportunity to attend physiotherapy sessions whenever needed. Participants also emphasized that these physiotherapists were of a high caliber, which had a direct impact on the entire team. These professionals were able to keep all athletes healthy within a team by providing constant physiotherapy. Participant 11 discussed how she noticed a major difference in her health and the health of her teammates once her NSO was given access to a physiotherapist. These physiotherapists were made available to the entire team

and allowed athletes to be more diligent with their treatments during their training and preparation for an Olympic or Paralympic Games.

Strength and conditioning.

Some athletes found that they benefitted from OTP-recommended funding and support in the area of strength and conditioning during their training. Those athletes who had a full-time strength and conditioning coach with them felt that they were able to push themselves to reach their full potential on a daily basis. Having this coach with them regularly meant that a higher level of training was being put into each and every single workout. Participant 2 indicated that although OTP-recommended funding and support was benefiting them in many areas, it was not when it came to strength and conditioning. The athlete felt that she needed a coach every day to assist and educate her on the various muscles she was working out during her training alone.

Biomechanics.

OTP-recommended funding and support resulted in two NSOs and athletes gaining access to a biomechanist. This professional would be present at various training camps during the year and was able to perform specific testing based on the sport. Using advanced video technology, the biomechanist was able to track and monitor characteristics of an athlete's performance as speed and assist in evaluating the technique and efficiency of the movements of the athletes.

Chiropractor.

Only Participant 9 discussed the benefit received in the form of a chiropractor from OTP-recommended funding and support. This particular athlete felt he had an advantage by having a chiropractor travel along with the team to the Games.

Technical/Training Support**Training camps.**

The most frequently mentioned resource was that of training camps. These training camps were one of the great benefits athletes experienced as a result of OTP-recommended funding and support. The camps were generally held outside of Canada and allowed athletes to receive the high quality daily training needed to improve their performances at international competitions. Athletes shared stories about various training camps they previously attended with their NSO and explained how the increase in funding allowed them to either stay for a longer duration or to attend multiple camps in a given year.

A few participants expressed the importance of these camps as it allowed them to train with other high performance athletes, which resulted in a daily competitive environment. Winter athletes greatly benefitted from these camps as it provided them with more snow camps at various mountains abroad, something that was not always available prior to OTP. Several athletes indicated that these camps essentially created a bubble for them allowing them to completely focus solely on their training and other critical aspects such as nutrition. Athletes addressed how these camps resulted in them feeling more prepared as it gave them the ability to do nothing but eat, sleep, and train for long periods of time. According to various athletes, having a closed off space where they could strictly focus in on their respective sport and training regimes led to improved performances. Overall, athletes felt they received higher quality training camps in much better locations than they previously attended before OTP. Athletes expressed how every

camp was expensive and felt that they would have been unable to afford this experience if it were not for OTP-recommended funding and support.

Coaching.

Athletes discussed how OTP-recommending funding and support resulted in their NSO having hired more coaches than they did in previous years. This funding allowed for more coaches to also travel with the teams and attend training camps as well. Not only did athletes have a greater access to coaches but they also benefitted by having higher caliber coaches. This increase in funding meant that various NSOs were able to hire top level international coaches. Athletes addressed how they had access to their coaches on a daily basis to help with all aspects of their training. Overall, athletes felt that the top level coaches their NSO hired resulted in them feeling better prepared for major competitions.

Equipment.

Purchasing new equipment for various athletes was made possible due to OTP-recommended funding and support. Participant 10 explained how she was able to buy her own pump-track bike that was to be utilized for training during the off season. In general, athletes felt as if they had a greater access to training equipment for themselves as well as their NSO team. As a result of increased funding, equipment became available to athletes who required specific equipment to train. Athletes expressed how this training equipment was of a high quality and something that probably would not be able to be purchased without OTP-recommended funding and support.

Technology.

During the interviews, three athletes discussed the impact that technology had on their performances at international events. Substantial research was done prior to the

beginning of embarking on any technological projects. An example given by Participant 4 in terms of technology was how a device was designed to track and measure speed throughout a race to see which parts of the race were faster than others. This information was then used to focus in on certain segments of a race that required additional attention or focus to increase the overall speed and performances of the athletes. Winter Paralympians particularly noted the importance of technology when it came to their respective sports. Athletes noted that the Top Secret project designed for winter Paralympians was the biggest contributor to their success at the Paralympic Games. Initially this project caused several athletes to become injured during the early implementation stages. However, athletes discussed how this technology directly and positively impacted their results at the Paralympic Winter Games. Athletes felt that these technological advancements gave them a competitive edge over other countries at the Games. Participant 6 expressed how it was obvious the Canadian team was able to handle the terrain better during competition than athletes from other countries who were not using the same technology. Without OTP-recommended funding and support athletes felt that none of these technological advancements would have been possible or even initiated.

Technicians.

A few athletes discussed the importance of having a technician regularly with them during events or competitions. OTP-recommended funding and support meant that, for some NSOs, they were able to fund and bring along a technician to major competitions, including the Olympic or Paralympic Games. Paralympians in particular, found this to be extremely beneficial for their preparation before competitions.

Technicians were able to be on site regularly and could rebuild any piece of equipment at any time. Participant 8 described how this was monumental for her as prior to OTP she was fine tuning her own equipment. She explained how this was one area she felt as a result of an increase in funding allowed her to catch up and be considered equal to the able-bodied side. Without the OTP-recommended funding and support some athletes felt that their team would no longer have access to a mechanic or technician in times of need.

Other.

Participant 10 explained how the OTP-recommended funding and support gave her access to resources she did not previously have prior to the implementation of OTP. She was allocated between \$2,000-2,500 to be used towards any aspect of training that would be beneficial to them. This athlete decided to use the money and participate in gymnastic lessons. Participant 10 believed this was beneficial to her training as it allowed her to work on areas such as aerodynamics and balance.

Participant 3 commented on how using all of the available resources can be extremely beneficial to an athlete's training and preparation. However, she explained how, at times, she struggled personally to find a balance between all of the resources and using them appropriately to her full advantage. The athlete also mentioned how when she was at the Games everything was well taken care of for her. She noticed areas such as massage therapy and cold tubs were always made readily available to her. Participant 3 expressed how this environment allowed her to really focus on her own event as she trusted everything else was looked after for her on a daily basis.

Pressure

All of the athletes interviewed discussed their experiences associated with pressure while preparing for the Olympic or Paralympic Games. According to Donnelly (2010b), athletes who were identified by leaders of OTP as being a potential medalist at the Olympic Games felt additional pressure to perform. Similar, Willes (2010) also attributed the OTP high performance strategy for putting unnecessary pressure on Canadian athletes to reach the podium. Results from my study supported this notion as six athletes discussed feelings of pressure, either directly or indirectly from OTP to achieve podium results at the Olympic or Paralympic Games. Seven athletes however, discussed not feeling any additional pressure as a result of the OTP strategy which refutes the statements of both Donnelly (2010b) and Willes (2010). Athletes who identified not feeling pressure from OTP explained how any increase in pressure came from being a high performance athlete, a previous Olympian or Paralympian, the media, or as inner pressure they put on themselves to perform at the Games. Table 3.2 lists the various codes within the theme of pressure and includes sample quotations that pertain to each code.

Table 3.2 Pressure

Theme: Pressure						
THEMES	SOURCES	FREQUENCY	CODES	SOURCES	FREQUENCY	SAMPLE QUOTATIONS
PRESSURE	100%	75	Inner Pressure	64%	12	<i>"I think it's reasonable and realistic. I'm an athlete that's been successful in my career and had lots of podiums and I place the same expectation on myself. So for sure it adds a little element of pressure but it's the same pressure I'd be putting on myself regardless." - participant 6</i>

			Did Not Feel OTP Pressure	64%	10	<i>"I have to hand it to them I never felt any pressure from Own the Podium at all. I knew they existed and they were this entity and woo-hoo and it was boosting our program. But I never felt, not for a second – I mean I felt pressure – I think what I realize now and I think over the years leading up to 2010 I started to realize is that there was an extreme amount of pressure sort of from my coaches, but more so from our high performance director." - participant 8</i>
			Felt OTP Pressure	55%	18	<i>"What I found the hardest about it all was that there was major pressure from Own the Podium and B2ten but in a different way, to have a coach." - participant 5</i>

			High Performance Athlete	55%	9	<p><i>“So remove Own the Podium, that pressure would stay the exact same thing, it’s a good way of looking at it. From your NSO, from your country, from your family and your friends, from yourself more importantly, and from your results. If you have performed incredibly well leading up two years, one year, six months out, five months out of the games, that pressure just comes from you because it’s good because you’ve been doing well. It has nothing to do with Own the Podium.”</i></p> <p><i>– participant 10</i></p>
--	--	--	--------------------------------	-----	---	--

			Previous Olympian or Paralympian	45%	7	<p><i>“Or knowing I’ve got a real shot at this and now where can I tweak it just a little bit and maybe I shouldn’t risk it because I’m in good standings and we don’t need a Gold medal we only need a Bronze medal. And Gold, if I risk it we’re going to get nothing. So it’s kind of that sort of thing and riding today for tomorrow especially for Brazil. So it’s a lot of pressure on me in the sense of how long I’ve been in it and how successful I have been. And I think the pressure on me was more to prove that I wasn’t a one-time wonder in Beijing. So the pressure for me was more that I could do it again at a World Games and bring results home twice on two different [equipment]. And now the pressure is a little bit less because I’m like okay. I’m not just one lucky time [sport].” – participant 7</i></p>
--	--	--	--	-----	---	---

			Media Pressure	36%	7	<p><i>"For me I'd say the biggest source of pressure going in was media and it's not because the pressure was never because people were demanding performance. It was the constant asking of how we were going to do and having to say how you felt you could do at the Olympics and feeling sincere, but also being realistic. Because you don't want to talk about the Olympics and be like yeah I just want to do okay. That's not really good enough. So it's how do you say yeah I want to go there and I want to perform without it all becoming all about a medal, because I think that's part of what happened to me – is I felt like I had to get a medal because I'd been saying to everybody who asked yeah I'm going to go there, I'm going to do my best I'm going to try and get a medal. So then when you're in 4th and 5th it's like ugh – rather than thinking okay man I'm in it, let's just do our best. It's like ugh I'm not there, I'm off." - participant 3</i></p>
--	--	--	----------------	-----	---	---

			Pressure to Podium	36%	5	<p><i>"And I think that's why underdogs are often able to perform better because they really value 4th through 10th, or whatever they're going for. But if you're one of the ones that OTP has named as okay they're one of our medal count for Canada, if we want to get this many medal you're one of them, then it's like okay well that's what I have to do rather than maybe where your best performance comes from – okay I have to get a medal, maybe your best performance always comes from I just want to give my best. Often your best is a medal performance but when you make it that it just changes the dynamic." - participant 3</i></p>
--	--	--	--------------------	-----	---	---

			Watching Performance	36%	4	<p><i>"The only time that I forgot to mention is when I knew that we're being watched is when one of ...we have someone from Own the Podium that is in charge of [name of sport] so he helps kind of mentor the national coaches and the organization of what is expected from Own the Podium and how could we tweak things and question some things to make sure we are kind of following protocol and everything. So I do remember as an athlete him watching a few times and the coach saying Own the Podium guy is here just so you know...he's watching us. I remember that and I was like okay bring it on." – participant 1</i></p>
			Other Pressure	36%	4	<p><i>"Having a lot of big sponsors felt like pressure because everyone had given me a lot of money so I felt like that they should see some results for that. I was feeling accountable to external forces, even though they weren't putting pressure on me. I would say that was my own construct." - participant 11</i></p>

Inner Pressure

Out of the 11 athletes interviewed, seven of them commented on how the pressure they were feeling was more of an inner pressure they were placing on themselves to perform. The athletes explained how as successful high performance athletes they place pressure on themselves to succeed and reach the podium regardless if OTP does or not. Participant 3 explained that she targeted herself as an athlete to reach the podium because of the fact she had medal winning performances in her sport for many years. A few of the athletes commented that even if there were OTP expectations, it did not matter as they had the same ambitious goals set for themselves to achieve at the Games. These athletes expressed that any pressure associated with OTP was irrelevant to them because they would have the same high expectations for themselves.

Participant 4 explained how whether explicitly stated by OTP that she was expected to win a gold medal at the Games, it was irrelevant as her own NSO and team goals were perfectly aligned. Participant 6 acknowledged that the OTP strategy could have potentially added additional pressure but that, in the end, it did not make a difference as even if OTP did not exist, that same high level of pressure would remain. Participant 7 explained how she considered what she experienced as primarily an inner type pressure in that she recognized she was the top competitor in her sport in Canada. For this reason, she fully realized the majority of her funding was invested because of her ability to produce consistent results, which motivated this athlete to be successful so that her sport could obtain even more funding and potentially increase support for her sport in the future.

Did Not Feel OTP Pressure

Even though athletes shared experiences associated with OTP pressure, there were still seven athletes who discussed how they did not feel any additional pressure. These athletes acknowledged that pressure existed while training and competing leading into a Games but expressed how it was not directly because of OTP. Participant 10 explained best how the pressure is unrelated to the organization by stating:

So remove Own the Podium, that pressure would stay the exact same thing, it's a good way of looking at it. From your NSO, from your country, from your family and your friends, from yourself more importantly, and from your results. If you have performed incredibly well, leading up two years, one year, six months out, five months out of the Games, that pressure just comes from you, because it's good, because you've been doing well. It has nothing to do with Own the Podium.

Participant 10 explains how the pressure she feels as a high performance athlete is unrelated to the OTP strategy and that pressure stems from a combination of other sources. Participant 11 agreed in that she felt she was accountable for any pressure she felt as she put it on herself directly to perform.

Another athlete, Participant 8, stated that never once did she feel any additional pressure as a result of the OTP strategy. She suggested that perhaps if there was any added pressure that it was felt more by her coaches and her NSO instead of the athlete herself. A few athletes agreed with this concept and felt that perhaps their coaches and NSO staff at times would shield them from any of the pressure associated with the OTP targeting and funding allocation strategy. Participant 2 also discussed how she never felt any additional pressure as a result of being a targeted athlete. She explained how she was

grateful for the opportunity to benefit from the OTP-recommended funding and support and did the very best with the resources that were made available to her.

Felt OTP Pressure

As mentioned earlier, Willes (2010) believed that the OTP targeting strategy led to additional pressures for the athletes at the Games. Results from my study agreed that the targeting strategy added pressure in that six athletes discussed that they felt some pressure as a result of the OTP strategy. Participant 2 directly felt the additional pressure associated with benefitting from OTP-recommended funding and support. She explained how she felt pressure to reach the podium as a returning medalist as she believed she was receiving the funding with the explicit purpose to produce another medal for Canada. Participant 5 emphasized how she felt major pressure from OTP in a unique way in that the organization made it clear that they wanted her to work with a coach and not be self-coached. Having to work with a coach was the only sort of additional pressure this particular athlete felt from the OTP strategy. Another athlete, Participant 3, admitted the high performance sport strategy added pressure. She believed that it was never too much pressure for an athlete to handle but did acknowledge that it potentially created additional unnecessary pressure.

Participant 6 also acknowledged that the OTP strategy added pressure on her as an athlete but she further explained how she would have put the same pressure and expectations on herself to perform even without the existence of OTP. The athlete stated that any expectations OTP had for her was realistic because she had been performing consistently well leading up to the Games. For Participant 6, she went into the Games with the exact same expectations for herself to reach the podium. In fact, Participant 6

stated *“when it comes to the pressure of getting podiums from Own the Podium and being a targeted athlete it’s like rewarding me for my years of hard work and the successes that I’ve had.”* Although this athlete recognized that the OTP strategy led to an increase in pressure she was grateful for it and welcomed the targeting status she earned from a successful career.

Participant 9 commented on feelings of pressure associated with the OTP strategy. This athlete felt strongly that constantly promoting athletes definitely adds an increase in overall pressure. He explained how all the available resources could add pressure and, if an athlete did not have proper coping mechanisms in place, this pressure could be detrimental. Participant 9 suggested that many leaders of OTP do not understand the pressure high performance athletes are under when they are training intensively and a top competitor in their sport.

High Performance Athlete

Out of 11 athletes, six commented on pressure they felt during their career as a result of being a successful Canadian high performance athlete. Athletes explained how some of the pressure they feel originates from previous podium finishes in their respective sport. Participant 10 clarified that the pressure for them had nothing to do with OTP but rather everything to do with trying to repeat or exceed previous podium finishes experienced in international competitions. As a high performance athlete, there is pressure associated with being able to reprise podium results. Participant 7 explained how she felt pressure as a high performance athlete to reach the podium again so that she could prove her previous podium result was not a stroke of luck at the previous Games.

A few athletes acknowledged that perhaps OTP created additional pressure on the athletes but they further explained how, as high performance athletes, they and their NSOs are consistently demanding and expecting podium results and performances on a regular basis. Participant 5 discussed how she felt pressure when she was a high performance athlete because she was the top athlete in her sport. This athlete believed that other athletes around her wanted to see her fail partly due to jealousy which resulted in added pressure on her to constantly perform to remain amongst the best in her sport.

Previous Olympian or Paralympian

Five of the athletes interviewed connected a portion of the pressure they felt associated with them being a returning Olympian or Paralympian athlete. As mentioned previously, Participant 1 explained how she felt additional pressure on her to perform as a result of being a returning medalist. Participant 7 was also a returning medalist; she described how she felt an increase in pressure to prove to everyone that she could perform again and win consecutive medals. Participant 3 also felt an increase in pressure at her second Games when compared to her first experience. She felt the training programs were more directed towards her leading into her second Games. Participant 3 addressed how this added an element of pressure for her as she felt everything was based around her instead of the entire team's needs. Although she explained how it was not too much pressure to handle, it was still added pressure that did not necessarily need to be there.

Another athlete, Participant 11, alluded to her second Games experience coming with an increase in pressure. She explained how she felt she was now better known and recognized going into her second Games which changed elements for her. She also

credited a lot of the pressure in her second Games due to the fact it was based on home soil. Participant 9 also felt an increase in pressure as a result of being a returning athlete at multiple Games. He believed he had no pressure in his first Games as he was not expected to medal, however, after winning a medal he explained how it led to pressure throughout the remainder of his career. For this athlete, he felt that he never truly developed proper coping mechanisms to fully deal with the pressure associated with being a returning medalist.

Media Pressure

Of the athletes interviewed, four of them identified the media as being a source of additional pressure they felt while training and competing. Both Participants 3 and 11 agreed that the biggest source of pressure for them personally was in fact the media. Participant 11 noted that the pressure came from an increase in media exposure and greater frequency than what she was previously exposed. She explained how she struggled to convey realistic expectations that she could share with the media while it appeared the media was purely focused on podium finishes. Due to a number of different factors, this athlete was unsure if a podium finish was even attainable for these particular Games. She attributed the extent of media exposure before the Games as extra pressure that negatively impacted her.

Participant 3 was another athlete who struggled with the media placing additional pressure on her. Similar to Participant 11, Participant 3 struggled with creating a realistic message to share with the media. For this particular athlete having the media constantly asking her how she was going to perform at the Games was overwhelming. Participant 3 did not want all the focus and attention to be on winning a medal at the Games. This was

a real dilemma for this particular athlete as the message she conveyed to the media was that she would produce a podium finish. This mindset negatively affected Participant 3 during actual competition. Specifically, when she was in fourth or fifth place in her race, she instantly became distracted and disappointed rather than believing she was close to a top three spot and in the hunt for a medal.

Although they did not feel the media was the principal source of pressure for them, both Participants 1 and 4 commented on how they felt an increase in pressure from all the media attention. Participant 1 explained a situation she experienced at the Games where Canada had not yet won a single medal before her event. Journalists questioned her about whether she felt any additional pressure knowing that Canada had no medals yet and her event was seen as a credible chance to win one. Participant 1 deflected the question but at the same time, the reporters added an element of pressure before her competition. Participant 4 also commented on the pressures associated with the media, explaining how the media often identifies athletes as Canada's potential medal prospects. The athlete expressed how this definitely added pressure on her but this expectation aligned with her own NSO's team goals. She further explained how even if the media stated she was a medal hopeful that this was in line with her own personal expectations and team goals for the Games.

Pressure to Podium

Four of the athletes who were interviewed commented on pressure associated with the strong emphasis on reaching podium performances at the Games. Wilson (2014) has previously questioned OTP because the organization has a narrow focus on producing podium finishes. According to Wilson (2014), podium performances should be an end

result from athletes pursuing excellence instead of a sole focus. Participant 3's views were similar to Wilson's (2014) in that she believed underdogs are often able to perform better than those targeted to achieve a top three result. Her reasoning for this was that she felt underdogs value top 10 finishes versus only top three. Participant 3 further explained how when you are targeted as one of Canada's medal hopefuls at the Games, it may change your mindset. Similar to Wilson (2014), Participant 3 believes that perhaps podium performances are an end result of an athlete giving their best instead of focusing solely on medals.

Participant 1 explained how she felt more pressure leading up to her second consecutive Games experience since she was a returning medalist. She was feeling pressure to make the podium again as a result of benefitting from the OTP-recommended funding and support. Participant 7 also commented on how she felt pressure directly to reach the podium at international events. She explained how Sport Canada and OTP's decisions on funding allocation, her results and specifically podium finishes were extremely important. Participant 7 discussed how she felt pressure to perform well because her NSO and team did not at the previous Games and, as a result, her team lost some funding.

Participant 6 believed it is realistic to emphasize podium finishes as she had been a successful athlete in her sport for many years. She claimed to have the same expectations for herself at major competitions so, although there is an increase in pressure to reach the podium, and that pressure would be there regardless of OTP. This particular athlete actually felt that the pressure she received from OTP to produce medals was extremely rewarding. In her opinion, she believed she was being recognized for her

previous achievements and less as an additional pressure. According to Participant 6, OTP did not add pressure but instead recognized her for her individual skill and believed in her as an athlete that she was capable of succeeding at the Games.

Watching Performance

Four of the athletes interviewed commented on how, at one point during their training, they were made aware that a representative from OTP was watching them during a camp with their NSO. Of these four athletes, only one demonstrated that having a leader of OTP watching them added an element of pressure. Having OTP leaders visiting the NSO teams at training camps was considered positive by the athletes and gave them the opportunity to sit down and discuss what could be improved in their training plans.

Other Pressure

Participant 1 explained that she was cognizant during her career that her NSO was receiving funding largely because of her successful performances. For this athlete, this added an element of additional stress and pressure. However, the athlete felt that it also motivated her to continue to strive to perform. Another source of pressure mentioned by another athlete was in the area of sponsorship. Participant 11 felt direct pressure from her personal sponsors due to the large investment the sponsors had made. As a result, this athlete felt she owed her sponsors a successful performance.

Participant 2 also experienced issues associated with pressure due to OTP-recommended funding and support. In this particular case, funding was being allocated to be used towards Participant 2's training-related expenses. However, her coach demanded to be paid a higher salary allocated from the OTP-recommended funding and support

budget. This created a lot of pressure on Participant 2 as the coach's salary was out of her own control and the athlete did not have the ability to reallocate the purpose of the funds thus creating a lot of unnecessary pressure and frustration for the athlete.

Missing Gap

Even with the OTP-recommended funding and support, athletes still identified several areas where they could have accessed and benefitted from additional assistance. Table 3.3 outlines that 82% of the athletes (9 out of 11) who were interviewed discussed how there were still areas of support (e.g., equipment and personal expenses, retirement) they could have further benefitted from if funding was allocated towards them. Only 18% of athletes (2 out of 11) indicated that there were no other areas they needed further assistance in as they felt fully supported in all areas through the OTP-recommended funding and support.

Table 3.3 Missing Gap

Theme: Missing Gap						
THEMES	SOURCES	FREQUENCY	CODES	SOURCES	FREQUENCY	SAMPLE QUOTATIONS
MISSING GAP	100%	42	No Salary	45%	9	<i>"So what happens when I'm away for six months I'm not working and so even though they're paying my expenses there was no budget for me to be able to say alright I can still feed my dogs at home and pay my electrical bill at home and my car, that kind of stuff. And it's not their fault but that's sort of what happened to me this year, it left me \$30,000 in debt. That's not their issue, but that's my sport, and that's even with the amount of funding that they put forth. So I've just been home and I told Team Canada in October when I got home, I said I'm not going to be able to compete for the next 10 months because I just need to pay bills, I need to work and pay bills. And that's just the fact of life." - participant 7</i>

			Personal Expenses	27%	6	<i>"It's just that the goal of Own the Podium is this. We don't want to give athletes money for things they already do we want to go above and beyond. It's like okay, I get that but ... it would take a lot of stress off of my plate if you just let me pay for my rent." - participant 5</i>
			Retirement	18%	11	<i>"What they really want, and I think what Own the Podium still wants is just to give money, give some lectures and then go to it. No real tangible support, no real understanding on what 24/7 365 days a year since you were 15 years old feels like. And then to retire – in my case you retire and you have no skills. You're just like oh fuck. How does this real world work?" - participant 9</i>
			Preparation	18%	6	<i>"And then I think too, it's hard to know what it's going to be like to go into Olympics as a favourite until you've done it. And it's like no matter how prepared you think you are it's hard to be prepared." - participant 3</i>

			Equipment Expenses	18%	3	<i>"I don't know whether it comes to an NSO issue or if it's more like a personal sponsorship issue. If I find myself one more personal sponsor it would probably fill in the gap. But for us even though we're on the national team for 12 years the [sport] companies don't treat us the same as the able-bodied athletes on the national team. So we still pay for equipment. It's not full price but as far as having equipment sponsors of that nature goes that's still an expense out of our pocket." - participant 6</i>
			No Missing Gap	18%	2	<i>"No I wouldn't say that there was anything that wasn't available." - participant 3</i>

			Additional Support Staff	9%	1	<i>"But that being said like it's not I didn't study in that I just did it with like I did tests on myself if I had a strength coach to follow me and be like okay well those muscle have to be strengthened so you don't injure yourself this way or you know like having a bit more for the complimentary work because I was good with the [name of sport] part but having more help for around it I think would've been good and I didn't get to do it with Own the Podium money." - participant 2</i>
			Other	36%	4	<i>"And my boots also just with my disability I've always had different adjustments and things and this is going to sound strong but I felt really abandoned by [name of NSO] where my boots were concerned, not supported." - participant 8</i>

No Salary

Almost half of the athletes interviewed discussed how even with OTP-recommended funding and support, they were still not receiving a salary. For these athletes, the Athlete Assistance Program (AAP) was by far their highest source of funding to cover their personal expenses. Jackson (2006) argued that AAP funding provides athletes with an adequate amount of funding to cover personal expenses. However, according to Thibault and Babiak (2013), Canadian national athlete team members still experience issues surrounding their financial situation and are in need of increased funding amounts. Athletes today are experiencing a shortfall of approximately \$15,000 per year after their training and personal expenditures are factored in (Ekos Research Associates, 2015). Results from this study supports what Thibault and Babiak (2013) and Ekos Research Associates (2015) expressed in that athletes felt they struggled financially. Athletes expressed how they find it unfair that support staff around athletes continuously earn a salary while the athletes themselves do not. Participant 5 referred to the athletes as a commodity in that everyone surrounding the athlete is able to be on a career path with a steady income.

Participant 2 expressed the frustration she experienced as a large portion of their training program was self-coached. She found it difficult that other coaches were able to earn a salary and yet she was not eligible to receive a salary even though she was coaching herself. For many athletes, not having a salary was extremely difficult as they were unable to work a full-time job and be a full-time athlete at the same time. Some athletes worked part-time jobs to try and help with additional expenses. Participant 8 noted that working part-time affected her training. She remembered going to training

camps in Europe and the coach complaining she was always sick. Participant 8 worked part-time and by the time she went to training camps abroad she was usually exhausted, which resulted in her frequently becoming sick. She acknowledged that this was not ideal but did the best she could to balance both work and high performance sport.

Participant 5 explained that it is extremely difficult to leave sport with absolutely nothing financially. She acknowledged that she did not expect to even follow a mainstream lifestyle but hoped a minimal salary would at least allow her to come out debt free. Participant 7 explained how, because she does not earn a salary, she relies solely on OTP-recommended funding and support every year. Without the funding, Participant 7 stated she would be forced to retire, as after 15 years on the national team, she has incurred personal expenses such as owning a home.

Personal Expenses

Three of the athletes interviewed commented on how the missing gap for them was assistance with their personal expenses. For these athletes, the OTP-recommended funding and support greatly helped them with their training programs in the lead up to the Games but provided no assistance for their personal financial situation. According to Thibault and Babiak (2013), Canadian athletes have previously expressed personal financial issues they have experienced while training and competing full-time in their respective sport. Results from this study support the findings of Thibault and Babiak (2013) in that the athletes experienced financial issues even while benefitting from the OTP-recommended funding and support

Participant 5 believed the OTP organization was about taking athletes to the next level by going above and beyond in their training programs to prepare them for

successful results. Although this athlete was appreciative of this, she stated that stress could have been reduced from her life if the OTP-recommended funding and support assisted with some personal expenses. Participant 5 explained how the funding was assisting her training but had zero impact on items such as her rent or her car payments.

Participant 6 also commented on how the missing gap for her was also personal finances. She explained how she currently has just enough available funds to maintain her lifestyle. However, when there is a year where an unexpected expense occurs, she indicated that she would struggle financially. Participant 6 explained how, in these situations, she is forced to hold debt on her line of credit in order to get by and keep competing for Canada.

Participant 7 also elaborated how her personal financial situation was negatively impacted while training and competing for Canada full-time as an athlete. For this athlete, she spent six months abroad training and preparing for the Games. The OTP-recommended funding and support was allocated to help assist with her expenses while training abroad. However, there was no budget where money was able to be allocated towards any of her house-related or personal expenses back home while she was away. For Participant 7, this actually ended up leaving her \$30,000 in debt by the time she returned home to Canada. As a result, the athlete told her NSO she would be unable to compete for 10 months as she needed to work full-time and catch up on all of her bills that were incurred while training abroad away from home. Participant 7 explained how her NSO understood her situation and allowed her to concentrate on working full-time.

Retirement

Two of the athletes interviewed commented on how the missing gap for them even with the OTP-recommended funding and support was assistance with retirement. For both Participants 4 and 9, they felt OTP provided no assistance with their transition and retirement from being a full-time athlete. Participant 4 stated how she believes athletes today are staying in their sport longer than previous generations and, as a result, it becomes increasingly difficult once they retire to transition into a new full-time career. She felt as if athletes were only receiving a handshake on their way out, as they retired from their sport. Participant 4 suggested that athletes should receive a payout for every year they were a carded athlete and competed for Canada regardless if they won a medal or not.

Participant 9 felt similarly and also did not receive any assistance when he retired from his sport. This athlete felt as if he retired from his sport and did not actually possess any work skills to help establish him in a full-time career. Participant 9 felt strongly that a portion of the OTP-recommended funding and support should be allocated to having an expert with transition experience meet with the athletes to discuss their future after sport and other areas that could lead to transition into new opportunities in education and/or careers. For this athlete, he believed what was missing for him was more specific education. He explained how he is still learning to do basic skills such as accounting and financial management. Participant 9 explained how, if he had assistance during his athletic career in the area of retirement, he might have been better prepared.

Both of these athletes acknowledged a program that is currently in place today known as Game Plan. According to Game Plan (2015) the transition program:

supports and empowers high performance athletes to pursue excellence during and beyond their sporting careers. Taking a proactive approach to life and career planning, the program is designed to help athletes navigate change and focus on performing when it matters most. (para. 1)

Participants 4 and 9 recognized this athlete transition program and wished it was available or that they had access to the support service during their own sport careers.

Preparation

Even with the OTP-recommended funding and support, there were still a couple of athletes who felt they were not fully prepared to perform at the Games. As mentioned earlier, Participant 11 expressed how she felt OTP was primarily focused on improving the milliseconds for athletes during their races and lost focus on other important aspects. For Participant 11, she felt the funding was being allocated largely towards research and technology-related projects. With the funding being focused on these areas, other important aspects were being missed. Participant 11 expressed her frustration about heading to the Games without a sport psychologist. She felt the funding being allocated into the advancement of technology was a distraction and members of OTP missed key areas such as the important role played by sport psychologists. The lack of support for a sport psychologist negatively affected Participant 11's overall preparation and ability to perform.

Participant 3 also commented on how the OTP-recommended funding and support did not leave her feeling fully prepared at the Games. For this athlete, she explained how it is hard to fully prepare for the Games when you are going in as a favourite or medal potential athlete for the very first time. Participant 3 also expressed how Games are never

the same experience and, as a result, it is hard to prepare as you do not know quite what to expect. She also felt she had tremendous support available to her in the lead up to the Games but struggled with knowing how to use each resource to her full potential.

Participant 3 explained how she felt all the resources were made available to her but what was missing was information or an explanation as to why each area (e.g., nutrition, sport psychology) was useful for her own performance.

Equipment Expenses

Two of the athletes interviewed discussed how OTP-recommended funding and support did not assist them with all of their equipment expenses. According to Jackson (2006), Paralympic athletes are at a disadvantage due to their unique training circumstances which may require additional costs. In both cases, these athletes were Paralympians. Jackson (2006) also stated that Paralympic athletes have far fewer opportunities in terms of sponsorship when compared to Olympic athletes. Participant 6 explained that the aspect missing for her was in the area of personal sponsorship, to assist in covering equipment expenses. Even after being a member of the Canadian national team for 12 years, Participant 6 was still responsible for funding her own sport equipment, which proved to be extremely costly at times.

Participant 6 discussed her frustration of unequal treatment by equipment sponsors when compared to able-bodied athletes. Although they do get a discounted rate, Paralympic athletes are still responsible for paying for equipment on their own. OTP-recommended funding and support are sometimes allocated to cover certain equipment however, not all necessary pieces of equipment are funded within the limited budget. Participant 8 explained that although some equipment is covered she often has to pay out

of her own pocket up to \$10,000 at a time for additional required paraphernalia.

Participant 6 explained that currently, she purchases the minimal amount of equipment needed to train and compete. She expressed the difficulties she faces during a year where she needs to purchase new equipment for her sport. For Participant 6, in past years, she has applied for various bursaries to help defray the costs. If unsuccessful or still short on money, she has used her own personal money or held debt on her line of credit to be able to purchase the necessary equipment.

Participant 8 also noted difficulties with her equipment with which OTP-recommended funding and support were unable to assist. For Participant 8, she required a very specialized piece of equipment because of her disability. This athlete felt as if she could have benefitted from having someone assist with technical adjustments on this particular piece of equipment. Participant 8 explained that she actually felt abandoned by her own NSO because her equipment was not considered in the OTP-recommended funding and support while other teammates' equipment within her NSO was OTP supported.

No Missing Gap

Participants 1 and 3 were the only athletes who felt that during their sport career they had access to everything they needed. Both athletes explained how the OTP-recommended funding and support provided them with all of the resources needed to be successful in their sport. Participant 1 stated she felt very fortunate for the funding as it allowed her to travel to all of the necessary competitions when other teammates within her NSO were unable to do so. Participant 3 expressed how there was never anything that was unavailable to her during her preparation for the Games. However, she felt she did

not know how to use all of the available resources effectively and to her full potential. For Participant 3, the support staff surrounding her (e.g., nutritionist, sport psychologist) was beneficial to her training but she felt she still lacked information on the various types of services available and was unsure how to use the experts effectively.

Additional Support Staff

Participant 2 was the only athlete who felt as if she needed supplementary resources in the area of additional support staff. This particular athlete felt she needed a full-time strength and conditioning coach to which she did not have access with the OTP-recommended funding and support. Strength training was an area with which Participant 2 was not entirely familiar. This athlete believed she would have benefitted greatly if she had a coach who was an expert in this area available full-time to assist her.

Other

Participant 10 expressed how she felt there were no areas she needed further support in except for nutrition supplements. She believed having access to nutritional supplements could have potentially benefitted her during her preparation for the Games. Participant 10 acknowledged however that nutrition supplements were not as important in her sport compared to others and understood why OTP-recommended funding and support were not currently being allocated towards it.

Participant 11 raised concerns in regards to what was missing in her training even with the OTP-recommended funding and support. For her, she believed that the OTP-recommended funding and support actually negatively impacted the basics in her training. This particular athlete explained how funding was going towards improving the milliseconds in race times but lost focus on the basic training components that would

have benefited her more. Participant 11 explained how many of her training camps were designed for her individually and she did not have access to a training group. At times, spending three weeks alone training was not necessarily beneficial to this particular athlete as she felt she needed other athletes around her to push her and train alongside. Participant 11 also expressed how she struggled with injuries during the lead up to the Games and that OTP-recommended funding and support did not necessarily help her in this area.

Participant 5 stated what was missing for her during her preparation for the Games was having someone with which to talk. She explained how it would have been beneficial for her if she had an athlete who had gone through the same process before her to talk to when she was feeling frustrated. At the time, there were no other athletes within her NSO who had also benefitted from the OTP-recommended funding and support.

Results

As indicated below in Table 3.4, every single athlete interviewed commented on their results at major events or competitions. Nine athletes mentioned how there was a strong emphasis placed on their results at competitions and obtaining podium finishes. A large majority of athletes also referenced how the OTP-recommended funding and support had a direct positive impact on their performance results during their career.

Table 3.4 Results

Theme: Results						
THEMES	SOURCES	FREQUENCY	CODES	SOURCES	FREQUENCY	SAMPLE QUOTATIONS
RESULTS	100%	37	Impacted Results	82%	19	<i>"100%, I don't think in Sochi, like from 2010 to 2014 there would have been that many [name of sport] athletes at the games or as the successes as we've had in the last couple years without the funding that we've had. That's a pretty grand statement but at the same time I'd say it's connected." - participant 10</i>
			Emphasis on Results	82%	18	<i>"There is an expectation for us to succeed and succeeding means more than just skiing well. It means consistently getting our butts on that podium. So I think it's a bold name but the project is what it's about, it's what the organization is about. So if you can't handle that name then you probably don't deserve their funding." - participant 6</i>

Impacted Results

Nine of the athletes interviewed commented on how OTP-recommended funding and support actually impacted their results at major events, including the Olympic and Paralympic Games. According to De Bosscher et al., (2006), investing in high performance sport has the power to impact the results of athletes by increasing their overall chances to produce medal performances. Previous research conducted by Houlihan and Zheng (2013) has also emphasized the importance of increasing high performance sport funding to assist athletes in achieving success. Results from my study support the stated research in that 82% of the interviewed athletes felt that the OTP high performance sport strategy contributed to their successful results at international events. Athletes discussed that OTP-recommended funding and support had a direct positive impact on their performances by contributing to them feeling more prepared than ever before leading up to an Olympic and Paralympic Games. Participant 3 commented on feeling well prepared for the Games stating *“I feel like I’m way more prepared to perform on a consistent basis and to excel.”* This athlete explained how the OTP-recommended funding and support allowed her to have greater access to resources which ultimately impacted her performances.

In the case of Participant 2, she fully believed that she would not have even competed in the Games if she had not received or benefitted from OTP-recommended funding and support. In fact, the athlete stated that the organization directly contributed to her success at those Games and contributed to her reaching the podium. Participant 10 also felt similarly in that she attributed the success of her NSO largely to the recommended funding her team had received over the years. The athlete recognized that

there was a direct connection between her NSO's medal results and the increased funding that provided her with enhanced available resources. Participant 6 also believed that OTP had a direct impact on her NSO's overall results at the Games. She explained how all athletes who utilized one of the 'Top Secret' pieces of equipment earned a medal for Canada. In Participant 6's opinion, this was evidence that OTP was having a direct positive impact on the results of various athletes at the Games.

Participant 4 also commented on how the OTP-recommended funding and support led to her feeling better prepared prior to the Games. She believed her successful results were in part because her preparation for the Games led to an increase in confidence in her abilities and readiness to perform for her event at the Games. Participant 4 explained her experience with the following statement:

I fully believe – it's like the aligning of the stars. We were able to check off every single box and whether that impacted our performance because we were checking the boxes or because it impacted our confidence that we've done everything we could. There was a lot that we had built up in our tool bag if I can call it that when you sit at a start line of a race or sit on the bench of a game or whatever and you feel confident that you've not only trained as hard as you possibly can but you've recovered properly, you have all these great things that have been done.

Participant 8 felt similarly. She elaborated on her experience sharing how she felt the OTP-recommended funding and support gave her access to everything she needed to be successful for the first time in her career. She credited the recommended funding and support for making her a better athlete in that it allowed her to train for longer durations and alongside quality coaches daily.

Participant 5 credited OTP for what she considered to be one of her best decisions during her career. As a result of the OTP-recommended funding and support this athlete was able to travel abroad and train for three consecutive months. Participant 5 believed this environment allowed her to focus solely on her training program which was directly connected to her performances. Overall, athletes felt that the OTP-recommended funding and support directly impacted their results at major competitions, including the Olympic and Paralympic Games. Athletes credited their successful performances due to the fact they were fully prepared to compete as a result of the enhanced resources that were available to them on a daily basis.

Emphasis on Results

During the interviews, numerous athletes noted that they were aware that OTP-recommended funding and support was directly related to their performances and results at international competitions. A few athletes recognized that it was critical for them to continue to perform well in order to remain eligible to benefit from the OTP-recommended funding and support. Participant 7 was fully aware of the importance of her results at competitions. This particular athlete's NSO had not had a top three finish for a few years and as a result received less OTP-recommended funding and support than previous years. Participant 7 mentioned how her perception was that if, as an athlete or team, you were not performing or meeting expectations, the money would be re-allocated to another NSO that produced results thus meeting OTP expectations.

Several athletes were aware that OTP was predominantly focused on athletes with the best odds of earning medals for Canada. A few athletes expressed how this narrow focus meant that only the podium results were valued in the eyes of OTP. Participant 3

was one athlete who experienced this and felt that athletes who finished outside of the top three were not valued by OTP. This athlete explained how this medal-focused mentality sometimes allowed for strong fourth and fifth place finishes going unnoticed. Participant 11 also acknowledged how OTP focused on top medal contenders stating *“my impression was that it was always like whether it was four years out or whatever it seemed like if you weren't top 12 in the world then you were really not fit for dog meat.”* Participant 3 shared similar feelings.

Two athletes commented on how the media was also emphasizing results, similar to OTP. Participant 3 struggled with the media coverage in that media were constantly referencing a top three performance for over a year before the actual Games. The athlete explained how there was an enormous amount of attention throughout the media on medal performances and that she struggled with this constant exposure for extended periods of time. Participant 11 also noted the emphasis placed on athlete results by the media leading up to the Games. This athlete found it difficult to craft a message to share with the media that was not focused solely around her anticipated results at the upcoming Games.

Targeting

It was recommended in 2003 for Canada to consider a targeting strategy for the high performance sport sector (Brisson, 2003). According to Brisson (2003), the reasoning behind developing a targeting approach was to assist Canadian athletes in achieving successful results in international competitions. As presented in Table 3.5, 91% of the athletes interviewed in my study discussed the concept of targeting within Canadian high performance sport. 36% of the athletes agreed with this sport strategy,

while 73% discussed the downsides associated with it including the creation of two classes of athletes.³

³ The reason these percentages do not add up to 100% is due to the fact that one athlete contradicted themselves during the interview in regards to their opinion on the targeting strategy.

Table 3.5 Targeting

Theme: Targeting						
THEMES	SOURCES	FREQUENCY	CODES	SOURCES	FREQUENCY	SAMPLE QUOTATIONS
TARGETING	91%	47	Downside to Targeting	73%	14	<i>"The biggest issue that I saw our team was it impeded our ability to do quality team training in a sport where you have to put in huge hours, do big camps, you have to be away of home. The value of the team is really big and to just pare it down to the number of people who can dance on the head of pin really took away from our ability to have someone there to push the limits, someone there on a bad day, someone there the other 20 hours of the day that you're not training. That was the main I thought significant drawback." - participant 11</i>

			Two Classes	64%	20	<i>"But my impression was that it was always like whether it was four years out or whatever it seemed like if you weren't top 12 in the world then you were really not fit for dog meat." - participant 11</i>
			Agree with Targeting Strategy	36%	6	<i>"Yeah I mean I think it's very important that we do target our best and give them support and I think that goes without saying in certain ways right I mean we want to be able to help those, those athletes that are you know whether or not they are just a little bit behind and need a little boost and so they can you know stop working full time or you know whatever it might be also just that internal motivation like I said just knowing that your backed up like you have that back up from your country and that support and that belief." - participant 1</i>

			Earned Targeting Status	27%	5	<i>"So I feel that the targeted nature on me was deserved, so I felt deserving and for sure it made me feel a little bit of pressure but again that's kind of the same way I approach every race so it doesn't really feel different than usual." - participant 6</i>
			Other	18%	2	<i>"So it took me a long time to kind of accept that yeah actually I'm a legit potential to win a medal at the Olympics." - participant 5</i>

Downside to Targeting

Even though some athletes agreed with the targeting strategy within Canada, eight athletes still commented on the downsides associated with this approach. According to Sam (2012), one implication of using a targeting strategy is that you risk upsetting individuals or sports that are not considered targeted. Results from my study indicated that Participant 6 noticed her teammates were upset because they were not targeted. The athlete explained how other athletes at times felt left out as they witnessed a large amount of funding being invested into only specific athletes, disciplines, and equipment. Participant 6 speculated that investing into specific disciplines where athletes could have the largest impact; however other athletes did not understand this strategy. Participant 8 experienced this in part when a piece of her equipment was not supported by the recommended funding and support. For this athlete, she felt abandoned by her NSO as she watched funding being invested into pieces of equipment for other athletes. The athlete indicated at times this added an element of stress as she did not realize why certain athletes' equipment and technology received more attention and support than others.

Two athletes commented during the interview on the perceptions their teammates had of them after they began benefitting from OTP-recommended funding and support. Both Participants 2 and 5 experienced similar challenges with teammates believing the athletes were better off financially because of the OTP support. Participant 2 explained how, when she was targeted, her teammates often thought that she was receiving money into her personal bank account, even though that was never the case. Participant 5 also noted that her teammates often expected her to pay for small incidental expenses as a

result of the support she received from OTP. These athletes explained how their teammates never understood that any OTP-recommended funding and support they received was allocated towards training and competition needs. The funding and support never went into their personal bank accounts but their teammates were under a different impression which at times made it challenging for athletes. Participant 5 also alluded to difficulties she experienced once she was considered targeted as she felt like non-targeted athletes wanted to see her fail. The athlete explained after receiving OTP-recommended funding and support she felt the additional attention led to even more athletes wanting to see her lose and be knocked down as the leader in her sport.

Participant 11 experienced a significant downside to the targeting approach during her training prior to the Games. The athlete explained how only three athletes within her NSO were targeted. In her opinion, this negatively affected the athletes as it dissolved her team. She explained how after targeting, her NSO never sent the athletes to large team camps. Participant 11 believed that this negatively affected her team training. She clarified how for her the value of a team was crucial as she trained and prepared for the Games. Cutting down the camps to only three athletes negatively impacted her while training for long hours at camps away from home. Participant 11 firmly believed the targeting strategy meant she lost the benefits of having other teammates around to help push her limits while training and also there to support her when not training.

The experience that Participant 3 had in regards to being a targeted athlete was that she felt the training program was too focused around only her. The athlete indicated that she did not think this was the best strategy as she explained she did not want all decisions to be made based around her. Participant 3 felt that this led to an increase in

pressure that did not necessarily need to be there. The athlete stated she would have preferred to have other teammates needs factored into the decision making process as opposed to her needs being the sole focus.

Participant 5 also experienced some downsides to using a targeting approach within the Canadian high performance sport system. This particular athlete lost her OTP-recommended funding and support at one point during her career. As a result, she fully experienced the negative effects associated with losing her targeted status. The athlete explained how while she was targeted she believed she needed all the available resources while training in order to be successful. However, once she was no longer targeted she did not have access to the same resources and this made her feel she did not deserve them.

According to Sam (2012), a question is whether or not investments within high performance sport should be allocated only to targeted athletes or also used to assist the development of athletes in general. Participant 5 commented on this notion and she believed that a targeting approach leads to resources being made available to too few athletes. This athlete believed that resources should be expanded throughout the different sports and that a chance should be given to more athletes to achieve success. She described the targeting strategy as an “*all-or-nothing mentality*” in that the athletes training experiences are significantly affected based on whether or not they receive OTP-recommended funding and support.

Participant 7 also discussed a disadvantage associated with using a targeting approach within high performance sport. She acknowledged that unfortunately there is only a limited budget available which means not all sports are able to receive the benefits

of OTP-recommended funding and support. This athlete realized that her funding was contingent on her performing well and it was understood that, if she did not perform, her funding would be reallocated to another sport. Participant 7 was also aware that in years when her NSO received additional funding that this funding most likely came at the expense of another sport that was not performing well internationally.

Two Classes of Athletes

It has been argued by Donnelly (2010a) that a significant drawback to having a narrow focus and emphasis on results is that it may potentially create two classes of athletes. Placing a strong emphasis on winning may ultimately lead to a group of elites (targeted athletes) and a group of others (non-targeted athletes). According to Donnelly (2010a), the group considered to be the 'others' may at times feel as if they were treated like a second class citizen. Results from my study support this idea in that seven athletes commented on two different classes of athletes existing within Canadian high performance sport.

In the case of Participant 5, as an athlete who lost her OTP-recommended funding and support during her career, she experienced first-hand the existence of two different classes of athletes. This athlete fully believed that had she continued to be a targeted athlete she would have been treated differently at the Games. This athlete asked for a piece of equipment at the Games to assist with her preparation. She was treated as if this was a huge inconvenience for those working at the Games and believed if she was a targeted athlete she would have been treated differently. She had a direct experience whereby she made a minor mistake at the Games and felt that the individuals surrounding her wanted to discipline her for her actions. She felt this was unfair as she witnessed

athletes who won medals for Canada with inappropriate behaviour yet they were not punished or reprimanded for their behaviour. Participant 5 stated *“It is really insane. The in-crowd and the out-crowd and even within the medalists it’s like who’s the more important medalist than the other. It’s quite the clique.”* This result supports the idea that there were in fact two different classes of athletes within Canadian high performance sport. The experience of Participant 5 was that if you were a targeted athlete you had the ability to get away with anything as you were under more pressure to perform than the non-targeted athletes at the Games.

Participant 10 expressed how in her sport she noticed that OTP specifically focused on the younger athletes who had the potential to be successful. She explained how older athletes in her sport who had not previously earned a medal received no attention even if they were still ranked a top athlete in the country or world. Participant 11 also noted that athletes within her sport were not valued if they were outside of the top 12. In her opinion, she believed the targeting strategy was turning away great athletes. She also felt as if not only were athletes outside of the top 12 being ignored but that their confidence levels diminished over time.

Both Participants 6 and 8 noticed within their sport that some athletes who may have been considered the ‘others’ were at times upset and did not understand why other athletes were receiving more attention than them. Participant 6 explained how attempts were made to try and make these athletes more content by assisting with improvement on certain aspects of their equipment. In the end, the adjustments did not help the athletes and they eventually accepted the fact that other athletes received more attention to certain equipment and technology-related innovations. Participant 8’s experience was similar in

that she noticed several younger athletes with less experience were continuously questioning why certain athletes were being treated differently than others in terms of equipment or training camp opportunities. It is clear that two different classes of athletes existed as described by the experience of Participant 8. She indicated that before the Games her team would be split and certain athletes would go to one training camp while the rest went to another. Although Participant 8 was in favour of this approach, it still demonstrated that two classes existed as the higher-ranked athletes would all attend the same training camp.

Participant 8 also reflected on a previous experience during the interview process that alluded to the existence of two different classes of athletes. She explained how while at one of her training camps during a team meeting OTP t-shirts were handed out to certain athletes. The athlete stated that athletes who did not receive a shirt were actually upset and questioned why they did not receive one. Participant 8 stated that she specifically remembered one teammate crying as they wondered if they did not receive a shirt because the coaches did not think highly of their skills or abilities. Something as small as handing out a t-shirt to only specific athletes demonstrated the existence of two different classes within Canadian high performance sport.

Participant 8 elaborated further on her experience sharing how, even prior to the distribution of the t-shirts, she could already feel that coaches had an idea of the better athletes in the group. In her opinion, the t-shirts only reinforced these notions. Participant 8 clarified that she did not believe a hierarchy was created directly because of OTP and felt that it already existed within her sport and NSO. In addition, Participant 8 further commented that she felt the OTP targeting was based on objective criteria that was based

on the perceived biases that her coaches had. Participant 9 was another athlete who shared strong feelings in regards to how athletes were treated differently. He believed OTP constantly defended those athletes who were in the targeted group and treated those not targeted like *“children or like outsiders”*

Agree With Targeting Strategy

According to Green and Oakley (2001), available resources should be targeted towards those athletes who have the greatest potential to achieve successful results at events and competitions. Results from my study indicated similar feelings by athletes in that four of the athletes interviewed revealed they agreed and supported Canada's new targeting strategy. According to Houlihan and Zheng (2013), investing funds into high performance athletes provides these athletes with the ability to train full-time. Participant 1 commented on how she fully agreed with the targeting strategy as it provides athletes who are close to achieving success with an additional boost that enables them to stop working full-time and focus all their energies on training and competing.

Participant 2 commented on how for her, the targeting approach provided her with a strong message. Being targeted helped this athlete believe in herself and what she was capable of achieving at international competitions. Participant 3 also agreed with the targeting approach because it recognized her for the years of successful results and rewarded her for strong, consistent performances. According to Sam (2012), applying a targeting strategy that invests in only select sports has the power to eliminate the concern of spreading resources too thinly. Participant 3 agreed with this idea and discussed how targeting was the best use of funds for a short term strategy. The athlete explained how

she believed what mattered the most to OTP was medals, which made the targeting approach logical for a limited budget.

Participant 8 also indicated that she favoured Canada using a targeting approach for the high performance sport system. For this particular athlete, she noticed the benefits directly associated with being a targeted athlete. She explained an experience she had during her career when her NSO would split up the team into two different groups for training camps abroad. Participant 8 believed having two different groups was beneficial to her training because, at times, her NSO was quite large with numerous athletes. For Participant 8, being split up into two different targeted groups allowed for a different focus at the training camps which she felt was valuable.

Earned Targeting Status

Three of the athletes who were interviewed discussed how they believed the targeting approach was earned based on their previous performances. Participant 1 expressed how by the time she was entering her third Games, she felt being considered a targeted athlete was well deserved. Participant 3 also commented on how she felt it was justifiable that she was identified as a targeted athlete with medal potential. For her, it felt good to be recognized for her previous performances and successful results in international competitions. This athlete explained how she considered it flattering to be acknowledged by OTP and to be fully supported for her journey toward the Games to reach the podium.

Participant 6 also felt her targeted status was deserved. The athlete indicated however, that being targeted in fact added an additional element of pressure while she was training and competing, leading up to the Games. Participant 6 explained how even

with additional pressure, she was being recognized by OTP for her previous successful results at competitions. In her eyes, the targeting approach was extremely rewarding as it meant leaders of OTP fully believed in her abilities as a high performance athlete to be able to consistently perform and achieve podium finishes.

Other

Participant 5 explained how after she was targeted, it still took her time to fully believe she could potentially win a medal at the Games. Eventually being targeted and benefitting from OTP-recommended funding and support led athletes to believe they could achieve successful results. However, for this athlete once she lost her targeting status and funding it negatively affected her self-esteem as she had grown accustomed and dependent on all of the resources that were available as a targeted athlete. Participant 6 also briefly discussed Canada's targeted approach within the high performance sport system. For this athlete, she believed her greatest difficulty was to retain a consistent level of funding over consecutive years. The athlete explained that with a limited budget available she recognizes that OTP is constantly re-evaluating their targeting decisions and how funding is invested into various athletes and sports.

Stress

Almost every single athlete who was interviewed commented on how stress was present during their career. Table 3.6 demonstrates that athletes' stress levels were associated with areas such as their personal financial status and the media in addition to being a high performance athlete. Even though stress was discussed by 91% of the athletes, 45% of the athletes explained how they experienced less stress once they began to benefit from OTP-recommended funding and support.

Table 3.6 Stress

Theme: Stress						
THEMES	SOURCES	FREQUENCY	CODES	SOURCES	FREQUENCY	SAMPLE QUOTATIONS
STRESS	91%	41	Financial Concerns	82%	10	"It's just that the goal of Own the Podium is this. We don't want to give athletes money for things they already do we want to go above and beyond. It's like okay, I get that but ... it would take a lot of stress off of my plate if you just let me pay for my rent. " - participant 5
			Less Stress	45%	11	<i>"I think it meant that you didn't stress about little things, about am I going to be able to train with the quality that I need. If I needed to go to a warm client to get training we could do that. If I needed a training group to prepare we could have it. If I had questions about any aspect of physiology or sport performance I felt like everything was accessible to me. So I guess it's just overall felt very supported to perform at my best."</i> - participant 3

			Biggest Funding Source	27%	5	<i>"Absolutely, like it's a lot of money it's a lot of money for us and I know because we aren't very good at getting additional funding in our organization we solely rely on Own the Podium in my opinion." - participant 1</i>
			Delayed Retirement	27%	4	<i>"I don't have any personal sponsors right now so all my funding comes solely from Own the Podium and Sport Canada. So for me it's a make or break deal. If I don't get funding from them I'm actually retiring. After 15 years it's like I need to – I bought a home and being away – I've got to be able to take care of my home...and I want to be an athlete and keep competing for Canada. So their funding is the difference between me retiring and me remaining as an athlete, so it's a huge deal for me." – participant 7</i>

			Media Stress	27%	4	<i>"Except, I think just in and around 2010 there was a little more stress in the air because it was at home and everyone's watching and Own the Podium was everywhere and in so much media. So it was kind of nice when 2010 was over. There was still the same emphasis on results but just these extra little stresses that didn't really need to be there in the first place were kind of removed from the equation. So I think that probably made Sochi just a less stressful environment. Still results driven but in a [inaudible] health way." - participant 6</i>
			Previous Olympian or Paralympian	18%	3	<i>"But when I was older, with the OTP funding and so on it didn't stress me out that much that they were stressed [coaches]. But some of my teammates who were younger than me were like oh no oh no. And for me I was kind of like okay this is my third go-round I know what I'm doing. I knew what I was doing. I wasn't worried for myself." – participant 8</i>

			High Performanc e Athlete	9%	2	<i>"It's the year of the Olympics so you have the opportunity to have all these training camps that you wouldn't ordinarily have. So rather than training in a solo environment you're training in a group environment. This can be a positive for some athletes or it can be a negative if you're not used to having a coach with you every day and then all of a sudden you get the evaluation effect of having tons of voices and feedback and everyone trying to make you your best, it can become overwhelming too." - participant 3</i>
--	--	--	------------------------------------	----	---	--

			Other Stress	9%	2	<i>“Basically our national coach said listen you guys want this, you guys want this, and this, and this is your expectation but we might not have the funding because this is what is expected of us so if you didn’t get your proper per diem blah blah blah we don’t have the money bottom line. That was maybe more of an organization but I know that again it’s one of our main sources of funding. So it’s stress its stressful leading to the Olympics no matter what higher expectations...” – participant 1</i>
--	--	--	--------------	----	---	---

Financial Concerns

Nine athletes I interviewed also commented on stressful financial concerns they had at some point during their careers. As discussed by Thibault and Babiak (2013), Canadian high performance athletes in the past have expressed worries about their personal financial situation while training and competing. According to Ekos Research Associates (2015), only 25% of athletes believe they receive adequate yearly funding. Participants in my study expressed similar views in regards to the financial concerns they experienced during their careers. For most of the athletes, these financial concerns were more prevalent prior to benefitting from OTP-recommended funding and support. However, a few athletes still noted significant stress associated with their financial situation even after receiving OTP support. Participant 5 explained how OTP had a positive impact on her training but did not assist in areas such as basic needs, for example covering her rent. Participant 6 also discussed that once her NSO started benefitting from OTP-recommended funding and support, her training regime became a full-time program. As a result, this athlete moved to a more affordable home in a different location, which alleviated a lot of her concerns surrounding her own financial situation.

Most of the athletes discussed that their financial concerns came much earlier in their careers as a junior athlete or even during their first few years on the national team when they had to personally fund various trips for their training and competitions. Without the OTP-recommended funding and support early on in their careers, these athletes were left personally responsible for providing the necessary funding they required for their training and competitions. Athletes explained that they relied financially on family, friends and community support to attend these major events. Ekos

Research Associates (2015) found similar results with 56% of the surveyed athletes indicating they relied on their family for loans during their career. In the case of Participant 10, she was participating in a sport that personally cost athletes within her NSO anywhere between \$10,000 and \$30,000 a year to be able to compete internationally for Canada. The athlete explained that even athletes who were going to the Games were still personally financially responsible for a large portion of funding to cover their respective costs. Participant 10 explained that she relied on family support and organizing fundraising events to generate enough money for her to be able to join the team each year. At times, the enormous financial burden added additional stress on the athlete. Participant 10 has since switched disciplines within her sport and is now a part of an NSO team that fully benefits from OTP-recommended funding and support which covers all training and competition-related expenses.

A few athletes commented on how financial concerns to varying degree were prevalent during the career of a Canadian athlete. Some athletes relied on their credit cards or line of credit more than they probably should have, but felt that this was their only choice. A few athletes indicated that they no longer wanted to borrow money from their parents as they had received significant support from them for numerous years. As a result, they resorted to holding a bit of debt on their own so that they could train and compete as full-time athletes for Canada. For these athletes, worrying about expenses related to their sport was a source of real stress. For many, early on in their careers, they struggled to find a balance between working for financial security and training as a high performance athlete full-time.

Less Stress

Benefitting from OTP-recommended funding and support meant that for some athletes their stress levels were reduced. Five athletes indicated that this support actually helped relieve stress in their daily lives. For these athletes, benefitting from OTP-recommended funding and support meant that all training and competition expenses were fully covered by their NSO. For Participant 1, the recommended funding and support meant that she did not have to stress as much about her financial situation. The support enabled her to not have to work part-time and allowed her to focus solely on training and their competitions. Participant 1 explained this concept:

but any type of funding is just a cushion I guess you could call it like something you can relax a little bit more for your everyday life and just kind of helps you see your career in more of a professional way and making sure everything's lined up and not having those financial constraints to restrict you.

For this athlete, the increase in funding and support relieved stress in terms of her financial situation and allowed her to focus her energies on being a full-time athlete.

Not only did OTP-recommended funding and support help athletes reduce stress about their finances but it also helped relieve stress in regards to their training program. Participant 3 explained that the support enabled her to have access to everything she needed on a daily basis to train and be fully prepared for the Games. The athlete indicated that she did not have to stress over the quality of training she was receiving as she had the ability to go and train in any climate she needed during the year.

Biggest Funding Source

Three of the athletes I interviewed commented on how their largest source of funding for their NSO and team was the OTP-recommended funding and support. As a

result, it was imperative that these athletes continuously perform well at the international level in order to retain their current funding level recommended by OTP. Participant 1 stated that her NSO solely relied on OTP support as her NSO did not receive additional funding from other sources. This athlete mentioned that, at times, it was extremely stressful due to the fact that her NSO did not have any diversified revenue streams and that they were heavily reliant on OTP funding every year as their single source of funding. Participant 6 also noted that her NSO heavily relied on the OTP-recommended funding and support as it accounted for a large portion of her overall training budget.

Similar to Participant 1, Participant 7 also acknowledged that her funding originated solely from the OTP-recommended funding and support. In the case of this particular athlete, this funding actually allowed her to keep competing for Canada and delayed her retirement from high performance sport. Participant 7 elaborated on this stating *“their funding is the difference between me retiring and me remaining as an athlete, so it’s a huge deal for me”*. Without the funding, Participant 7 explained that she would most likely retire from her respective sport. This athlete had been representing Canada for the past 15 years and relied heavily on the OTP-recommended funding and support in order to be able to continue to train and compete for Canada.

Delayed Retirement

As mentioned above, the OTP-recommended funding and support led to Participant 7 delaying her retirement from sport. Additionally, two other athletes interviewed expressed similar feelings to Participant 7. Participant 1 was unsure if she would continue competing for Canada in what would be her third Games experience. The OTP-recommended funding and support heavily influenced her decision to stay in her

sport and return for another Games. Participant 2 was another athlete who was able to delay her retirement from sport as a result of benefitting from OTP-recommended funding and support. For this athlete, she was debating retiring and entering the workplace due to her own personal financial situation. During this time, when she was contemplating her future, she began to receive the OTP-recommended funding and support. The athlete explained how this funding allowed her to delay working as long as she continued to receive the funding. Without the OTP-recommended funding and support, Participant 2 believed she would not have been able to be in a position to compete for Canada at the Games.

Media Stress

Three different athletes experienced stress during their sport careers that originated from the media. Participant 1 explained how she felt over time she grew accustomed to the media attention however; it was still not something she experienced on a daily basis which at times added additional stress leading up to the Games. Participant 3 also expressed how the media was overwhelming at times due to the buildup leading to the Games resulting in more exposure than to which she was used to. For this athlete, the constant media attention was draining as it was relentless for an extended period of time prior to the Games. The experience Participant 3 had was that there was so much media attention she was not accustomed to that it led to her not even wanting to talk about the Games at all anymore. The athlete felt she had consistent media exposure for a full 14-month period before the Games, which added additional stress to her life.

Participant 8 also credited the media for additional stress put on athletes who were competing in the Games. Specifically, she noted that there was a huge increase in media

exposure in 2010 when Canada was hosting the Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games.

The athlete acknowledged that there was always an emphasis placed on results; however with the media attention in 2010 the emphasis on results was greatly exaggerated.

Participant 8 expressed how it was a little more relaxing for her personally once the 2010 Games were over. For this athlete, her experiences at other Games were less stressful as a result of not having as much media attention.

Previous Olympian or Paralympian

Two of the interviewed athletes commented on the stresses attributed to being a returning Olympian or Paralympian at the Games. In the case of Participant 1, she believed she experienced more stress during her second Games as a result of being a returning medalist. However, by the time she entered her third Games, she felt she had developed coping mechanisms from her previous experiences to deal with any stressful situation. Participant 1 elaborated stating *“that third Olympics was almost gravy for me.”* As a result of being a returning athlete, Participant 1 felt that the third time around would be easier both mentally and emotionally based on her previous experiences. Participant 8 also expressed similar feelings as a returning athlete. This athlete also participated in three different Games during her career. For her, the third time she experienced much less stress due to her previous experiences and familiarity with the Games. Participant 8 explained how she felt confident in her abilities and less stressed overall in comparison to her younger teammates who were participating at their first Games.

High Performance Athlete

One particular athlete who was interviewed commented on how stress levels were directly connected to being a successful high performance athlete. Participant 3 noted

that, at times, she felt stressed due to an overwhelming number of support staff who became available to her through OTP-recommended funding and support. For this athlete, she struggled with deciding to which sport professionals to listen. As well, she needed to decide which professionals were more important in terms of her own personal training program. Participant 3 also commented on how sometimes being involved in training groups was stressful when she was used to solo training environments. Sometimes, this was negative as she was not always accustomed to having a full-time coach working with her every single day. Having constant daily feedback on her training and performance at times proved to be stressful and overwhelming for Participant 3.

Other Stress

In previous research, Sam (2012) alluded to the fact that as a result of utilizing a targeting strategy, NSOs are essentially competing against each other for funding as budgets and available resources are limited. One of the interviewed athletes commented on this concept during the interview process. Participant 1 acknowledged that at times it feels like sport organizations are competing against one another. The athlete indicated that when her NSO was presenting to OTP or preparing a written report, it was a very stressful time for the organization. For her particular NSO, they relied heavily on the OTP-recommended funding and support each year which made the preparation for the OTP meetings increasingly important. Participant 1 explained that members of her NSO did not want to lose funding to another NSO as a result of a poor presentation or written report.

Expectations

One particular area that was raised during the interview process was if athletes had feelings of increased expectations on them to perform and win a medal at the Games as a result of OTP-recommended funding and support. Four of the athletes interviewed felt there were no expectations specifically from OTP during their career. While six athletes expressed how they felt expectations at one point, including indirect expectations. Four of the athletes commented on how they developed their own personal expectations for their performances, which at times aligned with what they perceived to be OTP's expectations. Table 3.7 lists the codes found within the expectation theme as well as provides sample quotations that were relevant for each code.

Table 3.7 Expectations

Theme: Expectations						
THEMES	SOURCES	FREQUENCY	CODES	SOURCES	FREQUENCY	SAMPLE QUOTATIONS
EXPECTATIONS	31%	23	OTP Expectations	55%	11	<i>"Well, to be honest like the name says it all right. You have to be on the podium." - participant 2</i>
			Personal Expectations	36%	7	<i>"I think it's reasonable and realistic. I'm an athlete that's been successful in my career and had lots of podiums and I place the same expectation on myself. So for sure it adds a little element of pressure but it's the same pressure I'd be putting on myself regardless." participant 6</i>
			No Expectations	36%	4	<i>"Yeah so Own the Podium no, I've never had any expectations from them." - participant 7</i>

			Other Expectations	18%	2	<i>"I remember that next games just having a hard time with my message. I had a ton of media exposure so I had a high frequency of having to deliver a message and the message I was trying to balance was don't look to me for any results, that's unrealistic. At the same time just rattling of all these excuses was a huge bummer. So just trying to ride the line between realistic expectations and also stay positive and not getting too caught up in my own excuses of why I wasn't going to do well." - participant 11</i>
--	--	--	-----------------------	-----	---	--

OTP Expectations

Although some athletes indicated that they never felt any expectations from OTP, six athletes stated that they did in fact feel expectations. A few athletes commented on how they felt pressure to reach the podium at major competitions as a result of the funding. Other athletes felt similar expectations during their career indirectly through the OTP name. To some, this name made them feel that there was that expectation to reach the podium at Olympic or Paralympic Games. Participant 2 explained how she felt expectations in that she knew she and her NSO had to keep producing results in order to keep funding in the future. Although some athletes stated they sensed expectations from OTP, it was inconsequential to them as these expectations were consistent with their own and their NSO's expected performances of them. The expectations of OTP according to some aligned with their own personal expectations for themselves and their entire NSO team. Participant 8 commented on the expectations indicating that she was aware of them but agreed with them since it was an integral component of high performance sport. She recognized that, in high performance sport, it is customary and acceptable to expect successful results from athletes who are top competitors in their respective sport.

Personal Expectations

Four of the athletes interviewed stated that it was not a concern that they felt performance expectations from OTP as they had the same personal expectations and goals for themselves as high performance athletes. To these athletes, it was deemed reasonable and realistic for OTP to expect results or podium finishes from them as they had successful careers in their sports with previous podium results. All these athletes put the same expectations on themselves and set their own personal goals that were consistent

with their perceived OTP expectations. Participant 8, in particular, noted that she did not really care what expectations OTP had for them, as she demanded even more from herself regarding her performances and results.

No Expectations

During the interview process participants were asked if OTP had ever identified expectations they had for them as targeted high performance athletes. Four of the athletes interviewed stated that OTP never expressed any direct expectations to them during their career. Participant 3 explained how although she never personally felt any expectations from OTP, if expectations did exist, it would make sense to her. The reason being she was a top competitor in her sport and felt she had the potential to win a medal at the Games, regardless if OTP expected that result or not. Participant 3 also explained how in hindsight she questioned if expectations were present and if the funding meant that it should result in podium finishes.

Other Expectations

Participant 11 discussed the topic of media expectations. For this athlete, she struggled getting across her message to the media to not expect a podium finish due to her injuries. The athlete explained how this was extremely difficult for her in that she did not want to be perceived as making up excuses for her performance result but, at the same time, she wanted to set realistic expectations in terms of what she was capable of achieving.

Another athlete expressed how although they never felt any expectations directly from OTP, they did feel pressure from Sport Canada. Participant 7 explained that over the course of her 14-year career she was required to submit daily tracking system entries.

This system tracked everything she did each day from eating, training, sleeping, and injuries, to name a few. Participant 7 stated that she felt increased expectations from Sport Canada as they wanted to see exactly where their investments were going and ensure that it was not being wasted on the athletes.

Boost in Confidence

Although not all, many athletes did feel that OTP-recommended funding and support assisted in their preparation for the Olympic or Paralympic Games. Table 3.8 indicates that 82% of athletes agreed that this support positively affected them personally as a result of OTP and Canada fully believing in them as high performance athletes. OTP believed that these athletes had the potential to reach the podium at the Games which led to an increase in self-motivation and a boost in confidence for these athletes.

Table 3.8 Boost in Confidence

Theme: Boost in Confidence						
THEMES	SOURCES	FREQUENCY	CODES	SOURCES	FREQUENCY	SAMPLE QUOTATIONS
BOOST IN CONFIDENCE	82%	49	Believed In	64%	15	<p><i>“Just knowing that you're backed up like you have that back up from your country and that support and that belief.” – participant 1</i></p> <p><i>“For me I remember like when I was training alone in my garage in the cold and the wet and I remember I was telling myself they believe in me I have to believe in myself like I have to make it happen.” – participant 2</i></p>

			Prepared	36%	16	<i>"Yeah definitely. Everything has to do with feeling prepared and I think I felt as prepared as I could have been, directly because of the OTP funding." - participant 4</i>
--	--	--	----------	-----	----	---

			Supported	36%	10	<i>"Definitely I know that every opportunity that I think we have is a result of being funded, so yes. If we didn't have that money, would there be huge differences? For sure. Did I notice a huge difference between not being the targeted athlete in 2008 and being the targeted athlete in 2012? Hugely different in terms of the support and resources available. Yeah." - participant 3</i>
--	--	--	-----------	-----	----	---

			Confidence	36%	5	<i>"At every World Championship and the 2012 Games. I fully believe – it's like the aligning of the stars. We were able to check off every single box and whether that impacted our performance because we were checking the boxes or because it impacted our confidence that we've done everything we could." - participant 4</i>
--	--	--	------------	-----	---	---

			Motivation	18%	3	<i>"Yeah I mean I think it's very important that we do target our best and give them support and I think that goes without saying in certain ways right I mean we want to be able to help those, those athletes that are you know whether or not they are just a little bit behind and need a little boost and so they can you know stop working full time or you know whatever it might be also just that internal motivation like I said just knowing that your backed up like you have that back up from your country and that support and that belief." - participant 1</i>
--	--	--	------------	-----	---	--

Believed In

Seven athletes discussed during the interview process that they felt the organization, OTP, as well as Canada as a country believed in them as high performance athletes and what they were capable of achieving at the Olympic or Paralympic Games. To some, although they were receiving funding, they still felt an intrinsic value associated with OTP-recommended funding and support as a result of having people believe in them. Athletes discussed how being a targeted athlete meant that respected sport experts clearly saw them in the medal hunt and felt strongly that they had podium potential. Participant 5 expressed how this actually made her believe in herself and made her realize she deserved to win a medal and was talented enough to do so. OTP believed these athletes had the potential to reach the podium at the Games which resulted in a few athletes in return believing in themselves while training in preparation for the Olympic or Paralympic Games.

Athletes noted that not only did they feel OTP believed in them, but also Canada as a whole. Having those individuals around the athletes believing in them led to a boost in confidence for many. Participant 1 was under the impression that because she was successful at previous Games, OTP fully believed that she could reach the podium again in future Games. She also indicated that having the support from Canadian fans led to an increase in her overall motivation while she was training and preparing for the Olympic Games. Overall, OTP-recommended funding and support had a positive meaning for the athletes as it resulted in athletes feeling others had faith in them and invested resources to support them in their preparation for the Olympic or Paralympic Games.

Prepared

OTP-recommended funding and support directly impacted Canada's high performance athletes training regimes as they prepared for the Olympic and Paralympic Games. The support allowed athletes to receive all of the resources and training they needed prior to the Games which resulted in them being fully prepared to compete. Some athletes indicated that overall they felt better prepared to perform as opposed to previous Games prior to OTP. Participant 4 indicated that the OTP-recommended funding and support completely revolutionized her training, giving her access to many much needed resources. Athletes felt that their training plans allowed them to feel prepared on a daily basis and contributed to them being able to perform consistently. Overall, this support enabled athletes to train regularly and at a higher level which directly related to them feeling completely prepared prior to major competitions and events.

Supported

Four athletes explained how overall they felt very well supported as a result of OTP-recommended funding and support. A few indicated that this support enabled them to not have to work a full-time job and allowed them to strictly focus on training for their respective sport. Athletes discussed how they felt well supported to reach their full potential at major events and competitions, including the Olympic and Paralympic Games. Athletes specified that they felt supported directly because OTP believed in them as high performance athletes with the potential to reach podium finishes. Some athletes explained how they noticed a major difference in support and resources available to them as a result of OTP compared to prior Olympic or Paralympic quadrennials, prior to the high performance targeting strategy. Overall, athletes directly felt better prepared as a

result of OTP-recommended funding and support in the lead up and during the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Confidence

Four athletes expressed how OTP believing in them as athletes resulted in a personal boost in confidence. Athletes explained how they felt extremely confident in their ability to successfully perform at international events because they were well trained and fully prepared before major competitions. These athletes also discussed that they felt they had trained as hard as they possibly could before competitions, which resulted in an increase in their overall confidence. Vernacchia, McGuire, Reardon, and Templin (2000) support this finding and suggest that an athlete's preparation directly impacts their overall mental confidence levels.

Motivation

Participants 1 and 4 discussed how OTP-recommended funding and support actually led to an increase in self-motivation. Being targeted and funded to reach the podium, boosted their motivation. By virtue of being identified as medal potential athletes by OTP, both athletes felt an increase in motivation and were well supported by Canadian fans who believed in them. This support was extremely motivating to these two particular athletes in helping them want to achieve podium results at the Games.

OTP Relationship

The athletes interviewed expressed mixed reviews about their relationship with the OTP organization and/or staff as demonstrated below in Table 3.9. The responses ranged from athletes experiencing a fairly negative view of OTP to athletes expressing a

very positive relationship with OTP. There were also a couple athletes who referenced how they had no relationship with OTP.

Table 3.9 OTP Relationship

Theme: OTP Relationship						
THEMES	SOURCES	FREQUENCY	CODES	SOURCES	FREQUENCY	SAMPLE QUOTATIONS
OTP	64%	37	Negative	27%	18	<i>"But with [OTP High Performance</i>

RELATIONSHIP		OTP Relation ship		<p> <i>Advisor], the second one everything we were saying he was doubting it like he wasn't believing it so okay I need this equipment well are you sure you need it like it was, everything was kind of like well if you get your physio to tell me that you need it then maybe we can get the money to you like so I needed letters from physio and therapist to say that it was one thing that was really frustrating ...like when I got injured like in my [body part] ...I asked OTP I'm like can I go to [hometown] cause [hometown] was I had my acupuncture, my massage, my physio there...that I used for so many years so I was can I go there and have that team looking at me but [OTP High Performance Advisor] was like she just wants to go to see her family so he refused so I didn't go and then I went through the surgery...So in January were</i> </p>
---------------------	--	-------------------------	--	--

					<p><i>supposed to do a training camp in [country] and a week before we left or something like that two weeks before they said oh by the way it's not approved so you can't go but we had like already reserved everything so it was really frustrating so I said well okay then if you don't let me go to [country] I want to use that money to go to [hometown] so same thing he was like well if you get a letter from people maybe I could let it go so I had to go to my physio, I had to go to [massage therapist], I had to go to people say hey can you write a letter saying that I can go to my hometown to have my own people looking at myself like at my injury so which is what I did and then with the letter they approved it so I went to [hometown] and I came back with almost no inflammation in my [body part] because the acupuncture worked really well there and so I came</i></p>
--	--	--	--	--	--

					<i>back and I was able to train a little bit and I'm like maybe I would've avoided the surgery if they accepted right away but he was so doubty and so difficult that so we have a lot of bad feelings towards the last guy that took care of us." - participant 2</i>
--	--	--	--	--	--

		No Relation ship with OTP	18%	12	<p><i>“Like I said it’s still to me the most condemning thing you can ever put on OTP is two times in four Olympics. 50% of them never spoke to me afterwards, the failures. They always spoke to me after the wins, great effort, they always met with me then. And nobody ever stopped and said we could probably learn a lot from what he learned because he failed miserably twice. And I won, failed miserably, came second, failed miserably. And I learned so much from two bad experiences and nobody ever talked to me.” – participant 9</i></p>
--	--	---------------------------------------	-----	----	--

		Positive	18%	3	<i>"I think because I don't know if this is totally a direct answer to that but because I'm on a smaller team we have a more I'd say intimate relationship with our coaches and actually Own the Podium. Like we know Own the Podium really well and I could email them and text them right now, I'm good friends with them."</i> <i>- participant 10</i>
--	--	----------	-----	---	---

Negative OTP Relationship

Three of the athletes interviewed commented how their personal relationship with OTP was negative. Participant 2 struggled with an injury during one point in her career and expressed how she felt the OTP organization was not there supporting her at a time when she needed it most. This athlete felt as if OTP was overtly pressuring and influenced her to schedule a surgery to address the injury. This athlete would not have otherwise considered surgery. Furthermore, she felt extremely frustrated following the surgery as she did not feel the surgery was necessary or helpful. In fact, the surgery caused more issues and took longer to recover due to significant inflammation. The athlete also explained how her relationship with OTP was negative because her high performance advisor hired by OTP, constantly doubted her intentions surrounding her recovery strategy. Whenever Participant 2 would request assistance in areas such as equipment and physiotherapy, her high performance advisor would question if she actually needed to access those resources. The athlete wanted to visit her own massage therapist and physiotherapist in her hometown; however the high performance advisor constantly questioned the athletes' true intentions for wanting to return to her hometown. For Participant 2, this resulted in a negative relationship with OTP as she felt the whole process was far more difficult than it needed to be.

Participant 9 expressed negative thoughts towards OTP leaders due to the fact they never spoke to him after any unsuccessful Games during his career. Participant 9 mentioned that leaders of OTP were always there after a podium finish but were absent if he finished outside of the top three. The athlete firmly believed that leaders of OTP should have taken the time, even after the Games he did not finish on the podium, to

debrief and learn about what went wrong and what could have been improved to assist toward capturing a medal. Participant 9 explained how he would have benefitted from a debrief with leaders of OTP after all of his experiences at the Games so he could transfer his knowledge as to what resources he felt were valuable and what resources had little impact for his performance.

Out of the 11 athletes interviewed, only one felt as if the OTP organization treated them like a child. Participant 9 believed he was treated like this by OTP in part because he was in the high performance sport system for a lengthy amount of time and he started when he was young. He believed that leaders of OTP still perceived him as this young athlete and their treatment of him had not kept pace with his maturity and years of experience in the sport system and at multiple Games. This athlete explained he was constantly surrounded by 'adults' making decisions about his own career without involving him. He emphasized the fact that he was an adult with children of his own and believed he should have had more input into some of the decisions being made in regards to his training and sport career.

No Relationship with OTP

Two of the athletes commented during the interview process that, at certain points during their career, leaders of OTP were not involved. For Participant 5, the only communication she ever remembered having with leaders of OTP was when she was notified that she would no longer be funded. Participant 9 also believed that many times leaders of OTP did not have a direct relationship with himself as an athlete. He explained how leaders of OTP would connect with his coaches or members of his NSO but would never take the time to ask him as the athlete how he was doing. Similar to Participant 5,

the only communication Participant 9 had with OTP after he announced his retirement from the sport was that he was no longer funded. Participant 9 felt as if leaders of OTP should have been more involved directly with the athletes during his career. The athlete felt as if he had valuable input to provide the organization based on his experiences but OTP never invested the time to discuss his experiences with them.

Positive Relationship with OTP

Even though athletes discussed their experiences of having a negative relationship with OTP, there were two athletes who believed their relationship with OTP had been primarily positive. Participant 10 believed her NSO and herself had a positive relationship with OTP due to the fact her NSO consistently produced athletes with podium finishes. She indicated she had a very close and personal relationship with leaders of OTP with which she could connect when needed. Participant 6 was another athlete who expressed that she noticed a positive relationship between leaders of OTP and herself and her teammates. This particular athlete explained how there were several times a staff member from OTP would be present at her training camps and would take the time to talk to the athletes to find out what was working and what areas could be enhanced. Participant 6 believed she was fortunate to have more of a personal connection with leaders of OTP due to the fact that one of the individuals within OTP used to coach some athletes within her NSO.

OTP Name

One theme that was identified during my interviews with the athletes was related to the OTP name. Table 3.10 below indicates that the majority of athletes commented on the brand name and expressed whether they agreed with the message behind it or not. A

few of the athletes also believed that the OTP name resulted in greater expectations indirectly, in terms of their performance.

Table 3.10 OTP Name

Theme: OTP Name						
THEMES	SOURCES	FREQUENCY	CODES	SOURCES	FREQUENCY	SAMPLE QUOTATIONS
OTP NAME	64%	20	Agree	45%	8	<i>"No, I think it's actually really good for Canada because we are often seen as a very nice country and say thank you lots and saying oh no you go first. I think it's actually good for the country to say this is what we want to do and we want to Own the Podium, and be bold about it." - participant 10</i>

			Indirect Expectations	36%	7	<i>"Well, to be honest like the name says it all right. You have to be on the podium...like that's the point of the money." - participant 2</i>
--	--	--	--------------------------	-----	---	--

			Disagree	18%	5	<p><i>"I think that Own the Podium and Canada in general actually has to reframe what they actually believe in. It's the idea, it comes all the way back to the basics that Own the Podium is the worst brand you could have ever picked. It really is. It should be something the line of Being the Person, the most important thing is that we have a group of Olympian alumni who are really diverse, intelligent, resourceful, caring people. And if they won medals fantastic." - participant 9</i></p>
--	--	--	----------	-----	---	--

Agree

Five of the athletes interviewed stated their agreement with the OTP name and were very much in favour of the message it was sending. According to Starkman (2011) and Wente (2010), the OTP program had been previously viewed as being un-Canadian. Participants 10 and 11 acknowledged this but completely agreed with the name, OTP. Participant 10 felt strongly that it was good for Canada as a country to publicly claim “*we want to own the podium.*” This athlete stated that, at the Olympic Games, “*it is your goal to win, you do not want to finish fourth, no athlete thinks that way.*” Participant 11 was also in favour of the strong message and believed focusing on success was in fact a positive mindset for her as an athlete.

Participant 6 also felt strongly about the OTP name and stated, “*if you can't handle that name then you probably don't deserve the funding.*” To this athlete, owning the podium was what high performance sport was all about and the name was very fitting and appropriate for what she was setting out to accomplish. Participant 8 also commented on the OTP name and applauded the message it was sending to everyone else. As a high performance athlete, she explained how she wanted to be successful and have podium finishes. For this athlete, she felt supported that the organization OTP was providing a consistent message and believed in the same goals as her. Participant 8 elaborated on the OTP name explaining how it was completely in line with what her coaches, teammates, and she believed in when training for high performance sport. She explained how she was already using phrases such as “*own it*” or “*go for it*” on a consistent basis which completely resonated with the OTP name for her.

Indirect Expectations

Four of the athletes interviewed commented on the OTP name in that it provided them with indirect expectations. Participant 2 shared the indirect expectation she received from the name was that you had to be on the podium in order to receive any funding. Participant 3 also felt similar when she explained how the focus was solely on those athletes who finish within the top three positions at major events or competitions. OTP's indirect expectations were also felt by Participant 6. This athlete acknowledged that, because of the name, she realized she had to produce results to maintain her funding levels. Participant 8 also felt the indirect expectations that were associated with the OTP name. She realized that her NSO was rewarded with funding if and when her team produced successful results.

Disagree

Even though several athletes were in favour of the OTP name and the message it was sending, there were still two athletes who disagreed. Both Participants 3 and 9 felt that the name OTP was sending a poor message to others. Participant 3 explained how the name gives the message that only athletes who finish within the top three are important. She disagreed with this as she sometimes felt that athletes who finish outside of the top three still have great performances and should be acknowledged. Participant 3 felt the organization should instead be promoting a message along the lines of "*Be the Best*" rather than being solely focused on "*owning the podium.*"

Participant 9 felt strongly that the OTP name was inappropriate stating "*Own the Podium is the worst brand you could have ever picked.*" This athlete believed the program should be renamed along the lines of "*Be the Person*" rather than OTP. Participant 9 explained how he believed it was more important to develop high

performance sport alumni who were caring and respectful individuals and that it should not matter if they won a medal or not at the Games. He expressed how the focus should be about developing good people and less about developing medalists. Participant 9 also suggested focusing less on producing podium finishes and focusing more on funding at the grassroots level.

Pre/Post OTP

Seven of the athletes interviewed discussed the noticeable differences that became apparent during their careers with the inception of OTP as an organization in the 'business' of high performance sport. As shown below in Table 3.11, for many of these athletes, the main difference they noticed was the greater access to available resources.

Table 3.11 Pre/Post OTP

Theme: Pre/Post OTP						
THEMES	SOURCES	FREQUENCY	CODES	SOURCES	FREQUENCY	SAMPLE QUOTATIONS

PRE/POST OTP	64%	15	Pre/Post OTP	64%	15	<p><i>"Yeah I believe it was around 2006-2007 I was given an extra \$10,000 a year from Own the Podium towards national competition, so that was a huge-huge difference because I got to go out and start competing more. And remember I was saying I went from minimal hours of [training] a day to 10,000 hours by the time I got to Beijing. And it had to do with being able to just train and focus on training and not having to work so much and or at all I should say and train. I think it comes down to the hours." - participant 7</i></p>
-------------------------	-----	----	-----------------	-----	----	---

OTP-recommended funding and support provided athletes with a greater access to professionals with expertise in areas such as physiology, nutrition, and sport psychology. Participant 4 remembered that prior to OTP she only had access to a sport psychologist sparingly. After the implementation of OTP, she was able to have a full-time sport psychologist with her NSO which made a huge difference to her. Athletes believed that after OTP began they had greater access to training equipment which was crucial to their training preparation.

Training camps was another area where athletes noticed a huge difference as a result of the OTP-recommended funding and support. The support allowed athletes to attend more camps than they previously had while preparing for the Games. Along with the implementation of OTP came a more substantial monitoring focus on the athletes' training plans. A few of the athletes felt that, as a result of OTP, their training preparation and planning was done in a more professional system than years past. As a result of the funding, some athletes no longer had to work part-time and could focus solely on being a full-time high performance athlete representing Canada in international competitions. Participant 7 directly noticed that there was more of a heavy focus on training full-time than in the years prior to OTP.

Overall, these athletes felt far more prepared due to the development of OTP when compared to their previous Games experiences without any OTP presence. According to Participant 8, the realization of OTP and the resources that came along with the new high performance sport strategy allowed her Paralympic sport to almost be equivalent to support provided to the able-bodied sports. Prior to OTP, these athletes felt as if the Paralympians within their NSO received limited support when compared to the

support provided to the Olympians. In general, these seven athletes experienced a significant and positive difference as a result of OTP in relation to the amount of support and types of resources that were made available to them and their NSO. According to Participant 5, the funding and support made a vast difference in her training and preparation leading to the Games.

Lost Funding

Out of the 11 athletes interviewed, Participants 2 and 5 lost their targeting status at one point during their career. As a result, they no longer benefitted from OTP-recommended funding and support. Sam (2012) discussed implications which exist as a result of using a targeting strategy for high performance sport. One of these implications is around the issue of funding only select sports which potentially risks upsetting athletes and sports that are considered non-targeted (Sam, 2012). Athletes I interviewed shared their unique experiences and provided some insight into the implications of removing funding from those who were previously targeted. Participant 7 also commented on her own experience with her NSO receiving less funding than years prior due to the fact her team was not producing results, which ultimately impacted the national team athletes. Table 3.12 below demonstrates how frequently the topic of lost funding was discussed during the interviews and provides a relevant sample quotation.

Table 3.12 Lost Funding

Theme: Lost Funding						
THEMES	SOURCES	FREQUENCY	CODES	SOURCES	FREQUENCY	SAMPLE QUOTATIONS
LOST FUNDING	27%	14	Lost Funding	27%	14	<i>“We did it right and first time I needed help I didn’t have it and then they cut me out so for me I felt, I felt like a broken horse like you don’t put money on a broken horse you know it’s just like it’s so that’s how I felt.” – participant 2</i>

Participant 2 described her experiences and how difficult it was for her to no longer benefit from the OTP-recommended funding and support. This athlete was a previous medalist who had become injured and eventually lost funding because she was unable to fully train and compete. According to the athlete, OTP recommended surgery to assist with the recovery treatment for the specific injury. Participant 2 expressed how she felt almost pressured into getting the surgery by OTP, as they wanted her healthy and back competing for Canada. The athlete felt that this surgery did not help her in the recovery process and actually increased issues with inflammation. With an unsuccessful surgery, the athlete was left unable to compete and thus became a non-targeted athlete. This particular athlete explained how frustrated she felt when she received a letter stating she would no longer be funded. At a time when the athlete needed the support the most, this individual felt as if she had none. To her, it was extremely exasperating as she had previously won a medal for her country at the Olympic Games and now, when she needed help, she felt it was unavailable to her. Participant 2 explained how this was a time when she needed the support the most during her career and felt cut out by the OTP organization when funding was removed from her.

Participant 5 explained how becoming a non-targeted athlete negatively affected her. This particular athlete's NSO was receiving \$50,000 when she was previously benefitting from OTP-recommended funding and support. Leading up to the Games the athlete was notified that her NSO would no longer be receiving funding. For this athlete, going from \$50,000 to \$0 directly adversely impacted her self-esteem as well as her financial situation. Participant 5 explained how this negatively affected her self-esteem as she was previously surrounded by individuals who made her believe she needed all of the

available resources to be successful and then the athlete felt as if she was told she did not deserve any of the funding once becoming non-targeted. She explained how OTP had contributed to her believing in herself as an athlete when she was targeted. However, after losing her targeting status she, in turn, experienced individuals telling her that she was not good enough to even make it to the Games. The athlete elaborated stating how OTP had made her believe in herself and that she deserved to win a medal however, when OTP removed her support it was emotionally harmful to the athlete and her self-esteem. Although this particular athlete no longer benefitted from OTP-recommended funding and support, she was still able to continue competing and made it to the Games largely due to B2ten. B2ten identifies Canada's top Olympic athletes and assists them in creating a plan to be successful (B2ten, 2014). This organization was able to assist Participant 5 financially during her quest for the Games even at a time when OTP considered them no longer targeted.

Participant 7 discussed her experiences with her NSO losing OTP-recommended funding and support. Unlike the other two athletes who lost all of their funding, this particular athlete experienced her NSO receiving less OTP funds than they had in previous years. Participant 7's NSO lost funding based on the team's lack of high performance sport results over the years. The athlete expressed how it was an extremely tough situation for her personally with which to deal. She explained the challenges she dealt with as a result of having less funding available than in previous years. Participant 7 lived in Europe for six months while training and competing. Although her training in Europe was still covered through OTP-recommended funding and support, some of the expenses were not. Items such as transportation while in Europe were not covered

through the funding. As a result, the athlete was unable to rent a car for the six months she was living, training, and competing in Europe, which proved to be a challenge. The athlete also expressed how she felt she was not able to train as hard without more funding. She specifically felt she did not have access to everything she needed to be successful. Even though Participant 7 found it tough to train with a smaller budget available to her NSO, she understood the situation. She recognized that for four consecutive years, her sport had received no medals at major international events. The athlete also realized that years when her NSO has access to greater funding means that those funds are probably coming from another NSO who lost some of its funding.

In summary, out of all 12 themes, four were repeatedly discussed during the interview process by all of the athletes. These four themes were: resources, pressure, missing gap, and results. The theme resources was discussed most frequently with 128 mentions throughout all of the 11 different interviews (see Table 3.1). In general, athletes described how the OTP-recommended funding and support resulted in them having greater access to IST and technical or training support than in previous years. The second most discussed theme was pressure with a frequency of 75 across all of the interviews (See Table 3.2). For some athletes, they felt that the OTP-recommended funding and support did in fact add an additional element of stress. Contrary, 64% of the athletes interviewed stated they did not feel any additional pressure associated with the increased funding or targeting strategy. Most of these athletes, felt that the biggest source of pressure was an inner pressure put on themselves to perform well.

Chapter V – Conclusions

Overall, results from this exploratory research indicate that athletes had a favourable perception regarding the Own the Podium (OTP)-recommended funding and support. Athletes discussed how they were appreciative of the increased financial support during their career. Donnelly (2010b) previously questioned the costly investment made by OTP and whether or not it greatly impacted athlete results at the Games. Previous research also questioned the programs heavy focus on earning medals and Wilson (2014) believed the narrow focus on winning may lead to athlete failure. Through the method of interviews, this study uncovered that the majority of athletes noted that the funding and support they received had a direct positive impact on their performances at international events, including the Olympic and Paralympic Games. Athletes who were targeted by OTP benefitted as they had greater access to the Integrated Support Team (IST) of experts and professionals such as exercise physiologists, nutritionists, sport psychologists, and strength and conditioning coaches. The assistance the athletes received from these professionals helped contribute to their successes at various events and competitions. Having access to these enhanced resources allowed athletes to feel fully prepared and confident in their ability to perform in major international competitions.

The majority of athletes discussed how the level of funding their National Sport Organization (NSO) received was noticeably different after the implementation of OTP's targeting strategy. Specifically, athletes were given the opportunity to attend more training camps or to stay for longer durations when the camps were held abroad. These camps served as an important tool during their preparation leading up to the Olympic and Paralympic Games as it enabled them to receive high quality training for longer periods

of time. Another critical resource that provided a competitive advantage, especially for Paralympic athletes, was the investment into development and research associated with technology. These technological advancements allowed the Paralympians to have a greater access to specialized equipment that contributed to their success at major competitions. One unexpected theme that emerged was how OTP-recommended funding and support led athletes to experience a boost in confidence while training and preparing for major competitions. This finding was interesting as previous work identified OTP's targeting strategy as an increased source of pressure on the athletes (Donnelly, 2010b; Willes 2010). The OTP-recommended funding and support may have contributed to motivate some athletes as it reinforced the belief that podium finishes were possible.

Even though the majority of athletes' experiences were primarily positive, there were still a few athletes who addressed negative aspects associated with the OTP-recommended funding and support. These athletes were typically those who lost their OTP-recommended funding and support at one point during their career. Sam (2012) stated that one risk of using a targeting approach is that you may upset or anger athletes or teams who are no longer considered targeted. Previous research has never explored the side effects associated with removing funding from these targeted athletes. This study explored the experiences of two specific athletes who lost their status as targeted athletes and their funding at one point during their career. Findings show that the removal of funding had a direct negative impact on the athletes overall self-esteem.

Other athletes shared their struggles related to an increase in media exposure and the pressures associated with being in the spotlight, particularly around the 2010 Vancouver Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games. As high performance athletes, many

participants felt that the majority of the pressure they experienced was an inner pressure they placed on themselves. For these athletes, they demanded successful results at competitions regardless if OTP expected the same results or not. One surprising result from this study was the fact that 64% of the athletes discussed how they did not feel any pressure from OTP to perform. This result was interesting as previous work (Donnelly, 2010b; Willes 2010) noted that the OTP-recommended funding and support led to an increase in pressure on athletes.

Several athletes also commented on how even though the OTP-recommended funding and support assisted their training and performance, it did not cover any personal expenses or lead to personal financial gains. Thibault and Babiak (2013) acknowledged the fact that Canadian high performance athletes have previously reported concerns in regards to their financial situations. Findings from this study demonstrated that several athletes were concerned with their own financial situation while training and competing for Canada. Many athletes indicated feeling frustrated with their lack of financial gains as the IST experts and professionals around them had salaries because of their involvement with their training yet the athletes were not receiving salaries for their time training. This athlete perspective regarding IST staff salaries was an interesting result in that I had never considered how the athletes feel about these experts earning an income due to their connection with the athlete.

Although the funding and support helped to reduce costs associated with training expenses, it still left several athletes dealing with stressful personal financial concerns as they did not have time to work while being a full-time high performance athlete representing Canada. While many athletes experienced stress during their career, a

surprising 45% felt that the OTP-recommended funding and support still reduced their overall stress levels. These athletes indicated that their stress levels were minimized as a result of the majority of their training needs being met while preparing for an Olympic or Paralympic Games. According to Ekos Research Associates (2015), funding concerns are a major reason many athletes choose to retire prematurely. Findings from this study showcased how the OTP-recommended funding and support led to a few athletes being able to delay their retirement plans as a result of the increase in support.

A few athletes commented on their specific relationship with leaders of OTP having been an identified targeted athlete. 27% of these athletes discussed a negative relationship when interacting with leaders of OTP. While other athletes, indicated that there was a non-existent rapport with the OTP organization. This may have been attributed to leaders of OTP working directly with members of the NSOs versus the athletes. In terms of the OTP name, 45% of the athletes were in complete agreement with the message the brand conveyed. Previous work alluded to the program being un-Canadian in nature as it is essentially announcing to other countries that we are better than them (Starkman, 2011; Wente, 2010). Findings from this study showed that only 18% of the athletes interviewed had similar feelings in regards to the program being un-Canadian. Several athletes expressed how they were in favour of the OTP name and how the OTP brand aligned with their own personal goals and performance expectations at the Olympic or Paralympic Games.

Recommendations for OTP

After interviewing 11 athletes who experienced the benefits of OTP-recommended funding and support, there are a few recommendations that could

potentially be advantageous for the OTP organization. The first recommendation would be to consider the voices of the athletes when making funding recommendations on how the NSO is to allocate their funding. As high performance athletes these individuals know what works and does not work for them personally while training and preparing for competitions. There were tensions between the athletes and OTP high performance advisors that were shared during the interviews. For example, Participant 2 felt strongly that she needed to see a specific practitioner to assist with her recovery. The OTP advisor did not respect the voice of the athlete and allocated funding to be used towards a different practitioner. In the end, the athlete believed this set her injury back and could have been avoided if her input had been considered in her recovery process by OTP. If OTP leaders considered athletes' input and feelings, this could potentially maximize the benefits to them during their training, it could lead to further assisting athletes achieve improved podium finishes. I would also recommend involving the athletes in the policy and decision-making processes within high performance sport in Canada as athletes are impacted the greatest. These targeted athletes are the recipients of the policies and decisions made by organizations such as OTP and Sport Canada and their voices should be taken into consideration.

Another suggestion for OTP would be to further assist athletes transitioning out of sport when they retire as athletes. For many of these athletes, they represented Canada as full-time athletes for several years and are often not well equipped to enter the work force after retiring.

Given the findings of this study, I would recommend that OTP consider allocating funding to a larger pool of athletes. Some athletes indicated that non-targeted athletes

within their NSO could have benefited from additional resources had funding also been allocated to them. This issue was recently raised in the media. Sport Canada has decided to conduct a review on the OTP targeting strategy to determine the “intended and unintended impacts of the targeted excellence approach” (Quan, 2015 p.3). Further consideration should be given to find a more balanced approach between investing in developing and supporting the next generation of high performance athletes within Canada.

My last recommendation for OTP would be to work with NSOs to address the division between the targeted athletes and the non-targeted athletes taking part in the same sports/disciplines. OTP needs to be more sensitive of the impact that targeted funding has on the athletes who are not targeted and the result this division has on the dynamics of national teams. A few athletes indicated that it was obvious other teammates within their NSO who were not benefitting from the OTP-recommended funding and support at times struggled to understand why they were receiving different treatment. I would also suggest that OTP is more cautious when recommending funding to be removed from certain athletes and recognize the potential detrimental impact this may have on their self-esteem and confidence. These athletes still went on to compete and represent Canada in international competitions and, as a result, consideration should be given to a phased approach to reducing their funding incrementally rather than completely all at once.

Recommendations for Future Research

In terms of recommendations for future research, I would strongly suggest interviewing those athletes who were not targeted by OTP or benefitted from their

recommended funding and support. I believe it is crucial to understand the experiences of the non-targeted athletes as they are also representing Canada at several international events and competitions. It is my intuition that these athletes who were not targeted would have a very different experience and perspective than those who are targeted by OTP particularly in sports where targeted and non-targeted athletes were training and competing side by side. Another recommendation for future research would be to interview members of various NSOs as well as national coaches. These individuals had more direct contact with OTP leaders and could provide more insight into the relationship between OTP and the NSOs. As well, interviewing these individuals would lead to a further understanding of the impact OTP had on those involved within the high performance sport strategy. I would recommend conducting case studies on specific NSOs to truly understand the long term impact OTP-recommended funding and support has on the athletes and their experiences as a targeted athlete. Conducting a case study on a specific NSO would allow for a deeper understanding of targeted athletes, non-targeted athletes, coaches, and high performance directors and the impact that OTP has on the national team.

In order to further strengthen and confirm results from the study, it is necessary to conduct additional research on a wider sample of athletes. It is also essential to conduct research with athletes from team sports. It is conceivable that team sport athletes may provide different perspectives on experiences with OTP-recommended funding and support when compared to individual athletes. Another suggestion for future research is to expand the sample size of Paralympic athletes as this study only consisted of three. Paralympians may have diverse experiences in comparison to the Olympians. In order to

improve the high performance sport system for Canadian athletes, a study worthy of consideration is a comparison of the experiences of male and female athletes. This particular study only had one male athlete and as a result was unable to draw any conclusions between the two groups. Future comparisons could also be undertaken for athletes living in different regions of Canada and the age of athletes studied as financial need and cost of living may be a consideration to take into account.

A key finding from this study was how the athletes believed benefitting from OTP-recommended funding and support directly impacted their results at a major event or competition during their career. This fact could be used for future research when using a mixed methods approach. Statistical data could be incorporated based on the athletes' results at international competitions. These competition results could then be used to compare those athletes benefitting from OTP-recommended funding and support and their corresponding results at major events. Further research to consider is to show any correlation between those who have benefitted from OTP funding recommendations and other sources of funding the athlete may have received (i.e., B2ten, CAN Now Fund). It would be beneficial to learn how this extra funding impacted the individual athletes and develop a comparison between the impact of OTP-recommended funding and support. Ethnography is another method of qualitative research that should be considered when conducting similar research in the future. Using an ethnography approach would allow the researcher to fully immerse himself or herself in the culture of an OTP targeted athlete and provide more intimate details of the athletes overall experiences. Lastly, conducting research in the future from a human resource perspective may provide a different perspective on OTP. Considering athletes as employees rewarded for their

performances could allow the researcher to evaluate the effectiveness of leaders within OTP in managing human resources. Future research could consider targeted athletes as employees who are rewarded based on their performance and podium results by their employer (OTP) and assess this employee-employer relationship.

References

- B2ten. (2013a). Athletes. *B2ten*. Retrieved from <http://b2ten.ca/en/athletes>
- B2ten. (2013b). Funding. *B2ten*. Retrieved from <http://b2ten.ca/en/about-us/funding.html>
- B2ten. (2013c). Who are we. *B2ten*. Retrieved from <http://b2ten.ca/en/about-us/who-are-we.html>
- B2ten. (2014). Purpose. *B2ten*. Retrieved from <http://b2ten.com/purpose/>
- Baka, R. (2006). The Olympic winter institute of Australia: A unique partnership model for high performance sport. *Proceedings: International Symposium for Olympic Research*, 127-139.
- Beamish, R., & Borowy, J. (1987). High performance athletes in Canada: From status to contract. In T. Slack & C.R. Hinings (Eds.), *The organization and administration of sport* (pp. 1-35). London, ON: Sport Dynamics.
- Beamish, R., & Borowy, J. (1988). *Q. What do you do for a living? A. I'm an athlete*. Kingston, ON: The Sport Research Group. Queen's University.
- Bergsgard, N.A., Houlihan, B., Mangset, P., Nødland, S.I., & Rommetvedt, H. (2007). *Sport policy. A comparative analysis of stability and change*. Oxford, UK: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Bird, I. (2010). A bird's eye view. *Coaches Plan*, 17(1), 9.
- Bloom, M, Gagnon, N., & Hughes, D. (2006). Achieving Excellence: Valuing Canada's Participation in High Performance Sport. Ottawa, ON: The Conference Board of Canada.
- Brisson, T.A. (2003). *Targets for athlete performance and the sport system*. Draft report submitted to the Interprovincial Sport and Recreational Council in support of the Federal-Provincial/Territorial Enhanced Excellence Priorities for Collaborative Action 2002-2005.
- Brown, D. (2008). From the partners in pursuit of excellence to Own the Podium: An ideological slip in Canadian Olympic sport. *Proceedings: International Symposium for Olympic Research*, 432-447.
- Burnett, T. (2012, August 4). Canada's Paula Findlay disappoints in women's triathlon. *Toronto Sun*. Retrieved from <http://www.torontosun.com/2012/08/04/canadas-paula-findlay-disappoints-in-womens-triathlon>
- Canadian Athletes Now Fund. (2012a). FAQ. *Canadian Athletes Now Fund*. Retrieved from <http://www.canadianathletesnow.ca/about-us/faq.html>

- Canadian Athletes Now Fund. (2012b). History. *Canadian Athletes Now Fund*. Retrieved from <http://www.canadianathletesnow.ca/about-us/our-history.html>
- Canadian Athletes Now Fund. (2012c). Jane Roos. *Canadian Athletes Now Fund*. Retrieved from <http://www.canadianathletesnow.ca/board-of-directors/jane-roos.html>
- Canadian Sport Institute Pacific. (2014). NextGen. *Canadian Sport Institute*. Retrieved from <http://www.csipacific.ca/programs/nextgen/>
- CBC News. (2013, November 22). Video file. Retrieved from <http://b2ten.ca/en/media/news/cbc-video.html>
- Christie, J. (1995, April 1). Sports facing major cuts will have to winnow athletes. *The Globe and Mail*, p. A8.
- Church, A. (2006). Owning more than the podium: An examination of the policy network surrounding Canada's most recent Olympic athlete funding program. *Proceedings: International Symposium for Olympic Research*, 381-386.
- Creswell, J.W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- De Bosscher, V., de Knop, P., van Bottenburg, M., & Shibli, S., (2006). A conceptual framework for analyzing sports policy factors leading to international sporting success. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 6(2), 185-215.
- Din, C., & Paskevich, D. (2013). An integrated research model of Olympic podium performance. *International Journal of Sports Science and Coaching*, 8(2), 431-444.
- Donnelly, P. (2010a). Own the Podium or rent it? Canada's involvement in the global sporting arms race. *Policy Options*, 31(1), 41-44.
- Donnelly, P. (2010b). Rent the podium revisited: Reflections on Vancouver 2010. *Policy Options*, 31(4), 84-86.
- Ekos Research Associates. (2010). *2009 status of the high performance athlete. Final report*. Ottawa, ON: Author. Retrieved from <http://www.ekospolitics.com/articles/0519.pdf>
- Ekos Research Associates. (2015). *2014 status of the high performance athlete. Final report*. Ottawa, ON: Author. Retrieved from http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/200/301/pwgsc-tpsgc/por-ef/canadian_heritage/2015/061-12-e/report.pdf
- Game Plan. (2015). Background. *Game Plan*. Retrieved from <http://www.mygameplan.ca/background/>

- Green, M., & Oakley, B. (2001). Elite sport development systems and playing to win: Uniformity and diversity in international approaches. *Leisure Studies*, 20, 247-267.
- HarrisDecima. (2012). Canadians continue to show their Olympic spirit going into the London Games. Retrieved from <http://www.harrisdecima.ca/sites/default/files/releases/2012/06/07/hd-2012-06-07-en1421.pdf>
- Harrison, D. (2012, December 27). Funding cut disappoints Canadian Olympian Jessica Zelinka. *CBC Sports*. Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/sports/funding-cut-disappoints-canadian-olympian-jessica-zelinka-1.1250482>
- Havaris, E.P., & Danylchuk, K.E. (2007). An assessment of sport Canada's sport funding and accountability framework, 1995-2004. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 7(1), 31-53.
- Hogan, K., & Norton, K. (2000). The 'price' of Olympic gold. *Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport*, 3(2), 203-218.
- Houlihan, B., & Green, M. (Eds.) (2008). *Comparative elite sport development: Systems, structure and public policy*. Oxford, UK: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Houlihan, B., & Zheng, J. (2013). The Olympics and elite sport policy: Where will it all end? *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 30(4), 338-355.
- Humphreys, B., Johnson, B., Mason, D., & Whitehead, J. (2011). Estimating the value of medal success at the 2010 Winter Olympic Games. Retrieved from <http://www.economics.ualberta.ca/~media/economics/FacultyAndStaff/WPs/WP2011-20-Humphreys.pdf>
- Jackson, R. (2006). Road to excellence business plan for the Summer Olympic and Paralympic Sports.
- Kidd, B. (2013). The philosophy of excellence: Olympic performances, class, power, and the Canadian state. *Sport in Society*, 16(4), 372-387.
- Kikulis, L. (2013). Contemporary policy issues in high performance sport. In L. Thibault & J. Harvey (Eds.), *Sport policy in Canada* (pp. 97-145). Ottawa, ON: University of Ottawa Press.
- King, N., & Horrocks, C. (2010). *Interviews in qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Kingston, G. (2010, March 22). Pumped about the podium; Mission accomplished as Paralympians post top 3 finish. *The Ottawa Citizen*. Retrieved from <http://proxy.library.brocku.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.brocku.ca/docview/241351931?accountid=9744>

- Macintosh, D., Bedecki, T., & Franks, C.E.S. (1987). Sport and politics in Canada. Federal government involvement since 1961. Montréal, QC & Kingston, ON: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Merriam, S., & Tisdell, E. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (4th ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Lawrie, K., & Corbett, R. (2011). OTP Evaluation 2011. Retrieved from <http://ownthepodium.org/ownThePodium/files/d3/d3fb916c-b3a8-4222-be1f-804803967423.pdf>
- Myers, S. (2012, February 23). Suncor funding eases Calgary wrestler's quest to reach Olympics; Company helps Canadian athletes and their coaches. *Calgary Herald*. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.brocku.ca/canadiannewsmajor/docview/923425006/7C2988932A0A421BPQ/1?accountid=9744>
- Own the Podium. (2014a). Canadian Sport Institute Network. *Own the Podium*. Retrieved from <http://ownthepodium.org/Partners/Canadian-Sport-Institute-Network.aspx>
- Own the Podium. (2014b). Funding. *Own the Podium*. Retrieved from <http://ownthepodium.org/Funding.aspx>
- Own the Podium. (2014c). Historical timeline. *Own the Podium*. Retrieved from <http://ownthepodium.org/About-OTP/Historical-Timeline.aspx>
- Own the Podium. (2014d). Own the Podium annual report 2014. Retrieved from <http://ownthepodium.org/ownThePodium/files/3a/3a01c2cc-6466-44e3-87b8-0b90adbaae21.pdf>
- Own the Podium. (2014e). Summer sports 2014-2015. Retrieved from <http://ownthepodium.org/Funding/Summer-Sports-2014-2015.aspx>
- Own the Podium. (2014f). Team sports 2014-2015. Retrieved from <http://ownthepodium.org/Funding/Team-Sports-2014-2015.aspx>
- Own the Podium. (2014g). Winter sports 2014-2015. Retrieved from <http://ownthepodium.org/Funding/Winter-Sports-2014-2015.aspx>
- Own the Podium. (n.d.a). Background. *Own the Podium*. Retrieved from <http://ownthepodium.org/ownThePodium/files/e4/e40a5a08-67b2-4c2a-9fdf-b97fef6df1a4.pdf>
- Own the Podium. (n.d.b). Facts. *Own the Podium*. Retrieved from <http://ownthepodium.org/ownThePodium/files/fd/fdaf70ef-739e-4998-872c-9840bd73ab54.pdf>

- Patton, M.Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Peel, A. (2010). The athlete as Sisyphus: Reflections of an athlete advocate. *Sport in Society*, 13(1), 20-31.
- Priestner Allinger, C., & Allinger, T. (2004). Own the Podium-2010: Final report with recommendations of the independent task force for winter NSOs and funding partners.
- Quan, Douglas (2015, December 6). Own the Podium helped more Canadians become Olympians, now more athletes want share of \$64M. *National Post*. Retrieved from <http://news.nationalpost.com/news/canada/own-the-podium-helped-more-canadians-become-olympians-now-more-athletes-want-share-of-64m>
- Sam, M. (2012). Targeted investments in elite sport funding: wiser, more innovative and strategic? *Managing Leisure*, 17, 207-220.
- Scanlan, W. (2003, March 20). Amateur athletes living in poverty. *The Vancouver Sun*, p. C12.
- Spencer, D., (2013). Own the Podium innovations help athletes like de Jonge. *The Chronicle Herald*. Retrieved from <http://thechronicleherald.ca/sports/1154242-own-the-podium-innovations-help-athletes-like-de-jonge>
- Sport Canada. (2012). Athlete assistance program. Policies and procedures. Retrieved from http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2012/pc-ch/CH24-11-2012-eng.pdf
- Sport Canada. (2015). Sport Canada Athlete Assistance Program policies and procedures. Retrieved from http://canada.pch.gc.ca/DAMAssetPub/DAM-PCH2-financement-funding/STAGING/texte-text/athlete_assistance_program_2015_1449583292452_eng.pdf?WT.contentAutho rity=13.0
- Starkman, R. (2000, September 24). Analysis: How we're failing our athletes. There's little funding, support or leadership. *The Toronto Star*, p. A1.
- Starkman, R. (2011, February 16). Own the Podium lived up to billing. *The Toronto Star*. Retrieved from http://www.thestar.com/sports/olympics/2011/02/16/own_the_podium_lived_up_to_billing.html
- The Canadian Olympic Committee. (2010, April 6). 2010 Olympic 'by the numbers': Part I. *The Canadian Olympic Committee*. Retrieved from <http://olympic.ca/2010/04/06/2010-olympic-by-the-numbers-part-i/>

- Thibault, L., & Babiak, K. (2005). Organizational changes in Canada's sport system: Toward an athlete-centred approach. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 5(2), 105-132.
- Thibault, L., & Babiak, K. (2013). Athlete development and support. In L. Thibault & J. Harvey, (Eds.), *Sport policy in Canada* (pp. 147-176). Ottawa, ON: University of Ottawa Press.
- Thibault, L., & Harvey, J. (2013). The evolution of federal sport policy from 1960 to today. In L. Thibault & J. Harvey (Eds.), *Sport policy in Canada* (pp. 11-35). Ottawa, ON: University of Ottawa Press.
- Tracy, S.J. (2013). *Qualitative research methods: Collecting evidence, crafting analysis, communicating impact*. West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Turner, R. (2010, February 23). Our athletes do feel pressure. *Winnipeg Free Press*. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.brocku.ca/canadiannewsmajor/docview/752240583/8A29774D4CBA475FPQ/12?accountid=9744>
- Vernacchia, R., McGuire, R.T., Reardon, J.P., & Templin, D.P. (2000). Psychosocial characteristics of Olympic Track and Field athletes. *New Studies in Athletics*, 15(3-4), 7-22.
- Wente, M. (2010, February 24). How Canada's Olympians won our hearts. *The Globe and Mail*. Retrieved from <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/globe-debate/how-canadas-olympians-won-our-hearts/article4311954/>
- Wikipedia. (2014a). 2008 Summer Paralympics medal table. Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2008_Summer_Paralympics_medal_table
- Wikipedia. (2014b). 2012 Summer Paralympics medal table. Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2012_Summer_Paralympics_medal_table
- Wikipedia. (2015a). 2008 Summer Olympics medal table. Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2008_Summer_Olympics_medal_table
- Wikipedia. (2015b). 2012 Summer Olympics medal table. Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2012_Summer_Olympics_medal_table
- Willes, E. (2010, February 22). Apologies required, but not from athletes; One thing Own the Podium has succeeded at is to imbue medallists with a sense of failure. *The Province*. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.brocku.ca/canadiannewsmajor/docview/269609477/4BF4CA75F7EC448FPQ/3?accountid=9744>

Wilson, B. (2014, February 6). Own the Podium is a recipe for failure. *The Globe and Mail*. Retrieved from <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/globe-debate/own-the-podium-is-a-recipe-for-failure-lets-scrap-it/article16724412/>

Zussman, D. (Chair). (2009). *The 2010 and beyond panel. Final report and recommendations*. Ottawa, ON: 2010 and Beyond panel.

Appendices

Appendix A: Informed Consent Form**Informed Consent [to be printed on Brock U Department of Sport Management letterhead]****Date:** [Date]**Project Title:** Own the Podium Funding and Support: The Athletes' Perspective**Principal Student Investigator:**

Hillary Pattenden, Masters of Arts (candidate) in Applied Health Sciences
Department of Sport Management
Brock University
Hillary.pattenden@brocku.ca

Faculty Supervisor:

Dr. Lucie Thibault, Professor
Department of Sport Management
Brock University
(905) 688-5550 Ext. 3112; lthibault@brocku.ca

INVITATION

You are invited to participate in a research project. The purpose of this study is to develop a better understanding of Canadian high performance athletes' experiences with receiving recommended Own the Podium (OTP) funding and support from their National Sport Organization (NSO) leading up to and including their participation in Olympic or Paralympic Games. You will be asked about your experiences with receiving funding and the impact it had on your training and performances in international competitions.

WHAT IS INVOLVED

As a participant, you will be asked to take part in a single interview with the researcher. You will be asked questions about your experiences as a high performance athlete who has received recommended OTP funding and support from your NSO. With your consent, the interview will be audio recorded, which will later be used to transcribe the data by the researcher following the interview. Participants will have the opportunity to complete a 'member check,' involving each transcript being sent to the participant to review and validate that the interview was interpreted correctly. The process of a 'member check' may take the participants approximately 60 minutes to complete. All participants will be expected to return any comments electronically within two weeks after receiving the original transcript. The interview will take approximately 30-60 minutes of your time, with the length depending on the level of discussion generated. The interview will take place face-to-face (at a location of your choice), via Skype, or telephone, whichever you prefer.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND RISKS

The benefit of participation includes the opportunity to share and reflect on personal experiences to contribute knowledge to the field of sport management, specifically as it

pertains to Own the Podium athlete funding and support. There are no known or anticipated risks associated with your participation in this study.

CONFIDENTIALITY

To ensure confidentiality, interviews will be conducted in a private room, occupied by only the researcher and the participant. This room may be an office, boardroom or a private room of the participant's choice. The information you provide will be kept confidential. Your name will not appear in any thesis or report resulting from this study; however, with your permission, anonymous quotations may be used that do not compromise confidentiality. Your sport or affiliation with a sport organization will be kept confidential and will not be included in the reporting of results. Shortly after the interview has been completed, I will send you a copy of the transcript to give you an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of our conversation and to add or clarify any points that you wish

Data collected during this study will be stored on a digital voice recorder until transcribed verbatim by the researcher. After the research has been completed, the interview will be permanently deleted from the digital voice recorder. All data collected during this study will be stored on the researcher's secured personal laptop. Data will be kept for the duration of the research process including the preparation of manuscripts for presentation and publications, after which time all electronic information will be permanently deleted and any hard copy information will be shredded.

Access to this data will be restricted to the researcher, Hillary Pattenden, as well as my faculty supervisor, Dr. Lucie Thibault. Data will be kept for up to a maximum of four years for publication and presentation purposes.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you wish, you may decline to answer any questions or participate in any component of the study. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study by contacting the Principal Student Investigator at any time and may do so without any penalty. If you decide to withdraw from this study all data collected will be destroyed.

PUBLICATION OF RESULTS

Results of this study may be published in scholarly journals and presented at conferences. Study results may also be shared with OTP if requested however no personal identifiers of the research participants will be revealed. Feedback about this study will be available from Hillary Pattenden via e-mail once the study has been completed in the Fall of 2015.

CONTACT INFORMATION AND ETHICS CLEARANCE

If you have any questions about this study or require further information, please contact the Principal Student Investigator (Hillary Pattenden) or the Faculty Supervisor (Dr. Lucie Thibault) using the contact information provided above. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Board at Brock University [14-059]. If you have any comments or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Research Ethics Office at (905) 688-5550 Ext. 3035, reb@brocku.ca.

Thank you for your assistance in this project. Please keep a copy of this form for your records.

CONSENT FORM

I agree to participate in this study described above. I have made this decision based on the information I have read in the Information-Consent Letter. I have had the opportunity to receive any additional details I wanted about the study and understand that I may ask questions in the future. I understand that I may withdraw this consent at any time.

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix B: Interview Guide

- Explain the purpose of my research
- Review participant consent form
- Attempt to establish rapport and trust: Introduce myself and tell participant a little bit about me

BACKGROUND

- Can you tell me how you were first introduced to your sport and what that was like?
- Can you tell me what it was like to become a member of the national team/Olympic/Paralympic team? When was this? Where played before?
- What was your 1st Olympic/Paralympic experience like?
- How did this experience compare with any subsequent Olympic/Paralympic Games (if applicable)?
- Can you tell me about a time where finances/funding were ever a concern for you?
- Can you tell me about the various types of funding you received once you became a member of the national team? [AAP? COC Rewards? OTP-recommended funding? Sponsors? Other sources?]

OWN THE PODIUM RECOMMENDED FUNDING AND SUPPORT

- Can you tell me what it was like to benefit from recommended OTP funding and support through your NSO leading up to your participation in the Olympic or Paralympic Games?
- When did your NSO first start receiving this recommended funding and support from OTP? Or, when did you first start noticing the additional support that was available to you as an athlete?
- How long did you benefit from OTP's recommended funding and support for your NSO?
- What was it like being identified as one of Canada's targeted athletes or medal prospect?
- Can you tell me about specific examples when the recommended funding and support provided by your NSO made a difference (if positive, ask if there were

any downsides to the support, vice versa)? Tell me about a time when this enhanced funding and support had an impact on your results at an event.

- Tell me what you perceived to be the expectations (if any) from OTP for your training and at the Games? Where did these perceptions come from, did OTP ever communicate any expectations to you directly?
- What was it like if your NSO lost their OTP-recommended funding and support or if you lost OTP direct support? (if applicable)
- Tell me what it felt like to receive this recommended funding and support from OTP to your NSO?
- Tell me what, if anything, was changed in your training regimen with the additional funding and support provided to your NSO?
- Can you tell me about where your NSO invested the additional OTP-recommended funding and support they received?
- Do you feel you were better prepared for the Olympic/Paralympic Games as a result of your NSO receiving OTP-recommended funding and support?
- Do you believe that the OTP-recommended funding and support to your NSO made a difference in your result at the Games? How much of a difference?
- How would you describe your overall experiences with regards to your training and competition plans leading up to the Olympics or Paralympics?

TARGET APPROACH

- Can you tell me how you feel about Canada's approach to identifying targeted athletes/sports?
- What are your thoughts on OTP's stated goals for each Games?
- Do you feel Canada could compete on the world stage without a targeted approach?
- Can you tell me about a time you had a new opportunity as a result of being part of a targeted sport, which you otherwise would not have received.
- Can you tell me about a time you experienced an issue within your team or NSO as a result of a targeting approach being used?

PERCEPTIONS

- Tell me about your perceptions in regards to the media coverage of Canada's medal hopes or targets before, during, and after the Olympic or Paralympic Games
- Through your experience with your NSO, what is your perception on the OTP organization?

PRESSURE

- Tell me about your experiences with any additional pressure as a result of being targeted or identified as a potential medal prospect. If so, who did you feel this additional pressure from? Please explain.
- Were you impacted in any way as a result of the fact that targeted athletes were publically identified by the media, your NSO and/or OTP? Please describe.
- Tell me about any difficulties/challenges (if any) you experienced with regards to receiving recommended OTP funding and support from your NSO?

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

- Do you feel that your NSO benefitted from the additional OTP support provided? Explain.
- Are there other areas of support you needed that your NSO was not able to fulfill even with the additional recommended funding and support from OTP? Describe additional items or areas you would have liked support for.

CLOSING QUESTIONS

- Is there anything we have not discussed that you would like to tell me more about?

Appendix C: Letter of Invitation**Letter of Invitation [to be printed on Brock U Department of Sport Management
letterhead]**

Hello, my name is Hillary Pattenden. I am a Graduate Student from the Department of Sport Management at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario. I am beginning to conduct research for my Master of Arts (Sport Management) thesis entitled: "Own the Podium Funding and Support: The Athletes' Perspective."

The purpose of my e-mail is to inquire on whether or not you would be interested in participating in an interview regarding your experiences as a high performance athlete with Own the Podium (OTP). The interview will be audio recorded and can take place in person, via Skype, or by telephone. I am particularly interested in understanding the experiences of Canada's high performance athletes who have received recommended Own the Podium (OTP) funding and support from their National Sport Organization (NSO) leading up to and during their participation in an Olympic or Paralympic Games. As well, I would like to uncover the impact that OTP-recommended funding and support has had on Canada's targeted athletes while training and competing. This study will involve a single one on one interview with you. This interview will take approximately 30 to 60 minutes.

Participation is voluntary and you may decline to answer questions. You may discontinue your involvement at any stage in the process. There will be no negative consequences for choosing not to participate or terminating your participation at any stage. Confidentiality will be guaranteed, however your experiences and opinions will be revealed in publications or oral presentations of the thesis project. Pseudonyms will be used and no personally identifying information will be included. As such, your name and sport affiliation will be replaced with a pseudonym and this pseudonym will be used in the thesis, in publications, and in oral presentations. Please note that Own the Podium will not be informed of the athletes (or their sport) who participated in my study.

Would you be interested in participating? [If yes, when would be a convenient time and location? /If no, thank you for your time]. [If yes, a letter of invitation outlining the study and procedures will be e-mailed to you immediately as well as an informed consent document].

If you have any questions prior to our interview please do not hesitate to contact me by email at [hp12do@brocku.ca]. Any additional comments, questions, or concerns may be directed to the faculty supervisor of this project, Dr. Lucie Thibault (Department of Sport Management, Faculty of Applied Health Sciences, Brock University) by email at lthibault@brocku.ca or by telephone at 905-688-5550 (ext. 3112). Additionally, this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Board

at Brock University, file number 14-059. The Research Ethics Office may be contacted by email at reb@brocku.ca or by telephone at 905-688-5550 (ext. 3035) if you have any questions about your rights as a research participant.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Thank you and I look forward to your response.

Hillary Pattenden, Graduate Student, Sport Management
Brock University, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada
hillary.pattenden@brocku.ca

Appendix D: Letter of Appreciation**Letter of Appreciation [to be printed on Brock U Department of Sport Management letterhead]**

Date

Participant's name & address

Dear [Participant's name],

I would like to thank you for the time and expertise you shared with me on [date of interview], regarding your lived experience with Own the Podium and its recommended funding and support leading up to the Olympic or Paralympic Games. Your participation and insights in my research has been essential to the understanding of the first hand experiences Canada's high performance athletes have with the organization and its programs and services.

In the near future, I plan on sending you a copy of your interview transcript for your review. I hope that the study's findings will be helpful in determining future policies, funding decisions, and targeting strategies with Canada's high performance athletes. If you have any questions about the research please feel free to contact me.

Again, thank you very much!

Sincerely,

Hillary Pattenden
Graduate Student
Brock University